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["MY DEAR GODFATHER," CRIED GUY, GROWING ALMOST BOWDOWN, "WHY WON'T YOU TRUST ME, WHEN I TELL YOU I SHALL NEVER MARRY?"]

GUY FORRESTER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER I.—(continued.)

TERRIFIED by his words and his strange manner, Emmeline rang the bell and sent in hot haste for the doctor. Meanwhile, her husband lay back, his eyes closed as though in slumber, and she sat by him motionless.

"He is tired out," thought the wife to herself. "A good rest will do wonders for him. Still I am glad I sent for Dr. Edwards. I don't like his manner; it is so strange!"

Quite an hour she sat there watching him before the doctor arrived. He gave one look at the still, calm figure of poor Septimus, and then said sternly to Mrs. Jenkins,—

"How long has he been like this?"

Emmeline was rather awed by his tone, but she answered frankly, though her eyes quailed beneath the condemnation written on the doctor's face. Half in self-excuse she added,—

"I kept the room quiet on purpose he should

not be disturbed, for I thought the rest would do him so much good."

The old man looked at her half in pity, half in angry scorn, at her ignorance.

"Rest!" he cried, indignantly, "do you mean to say you thought he was asleep?"

"Yes," helplessly. "Isn't he?"

"He is in a state of insensibility, brought on by some severe mental shock. Strong restoratives ought to have been applied at once!"

They were applied then, but it was long before they took effect. Dr. Ensor saw his patient undressed and put to bed; then, after promising to send a professional nurse, he gave a sharp injunction to Mrs. Jenkins,—

"Remember, he is not to be troubled with any thoughts of business unless you want to kill him outright. His mind must be kept easy."

"I will remember."

The doctor departed, and she crept back to the sick room. She did not love the man who lay there, but he was her husband; his lot was linked to hers; from him came all the luxuries she enjoyed. She had not been a good wife

to him, but she did not want to neglect him in sickness.

"Emmeline."

"I thought you were asleep?"

"No; the pain in my head is too bad. Emmie, I want to speak to you; come and sit down close to me, dear."

He had not called her "dear" for years. The word thrilled her through and through.

"But the doctor said you were not to talk."

Septimus half smiled.

"I must disobey him. Emmie, do you recollect what I was telling you a while ago?"

"Perfectly."

"You know, then, we are going to be poor." She interrupted him.

"Oh, no! The agent will be found and the money recovered, I won't have you fall of such gloomy things, Sep."

He half smiled.

"My dear, you must let me finish. If the man is not found I fear there will be a very scanty provision for you when I am gone."

"But you are not going to die."

He let the assertion pass unchallenged.
"I never insured my life. As you know, I was a rich man, and our family so often dying at thirty made the companies demand a premium I thought absurdly heavy; besides, I was a rich man, and it seemed a ridiculous precaution; but I wish now I had done it for your sake."

Emmeline was silent. She felt too stunned for words; her husband spoke as though death was very near.

"There was no settlement on you. I made a will, leaving you all I had, and I used to think, if anything happened to me, you would be one of the richest widows in England; but that's all altered now."

"Sop, I wish you wouldn't talk so."

"Shall you be sorry? Do you think you'll miss me just a little, Emma?"

The tears rained down her face. She was a weak woman—a selfish, and a narrow-minded one; but she was not wholly bad, and a wild regret filled her at these wistful words.

"Of course I should miss you, Septimus, but you are not going to leave me."

He smiled.

"Hold my hand, dear!" he said, feebly. "It all feels dark and cold, and the ship is sinking fast. It seems to me, Emma, I am going down with her."

And he did. Whether it was the sudden shock of his misfortune coming on a naturally weak constitution, or the pain of his commercial success, unable to bear the loss of his fortune, none can say; but the newspaper which chronicled the failure of the great Manchester firm of Jenkins and Co. also announced the death of the senior partner.

He was buried in the old north-country burial ground where his father lay, and all his creditors were paid in full; his lawyers and the faithful clerk, whose place in the firm was described by the "Co." managed this. No human creature could come forward and prove they had lost money by Septimus Jenkins. All his debts were paid in full, but the big residence had to be given up and its contents brought to the hammer; the lovely ornaments, the bric-a-brac, that had been as dear to Emmeline, passed to other hands.

Before the season was over she knew her fate. A small sum, sufficient if judiciously invested, to live in a hundred a year, was all that remained of the fortune for which she had sold herself. She was destined to make her closer acquaintance with narrow means than in seven years before she had been true to her plighted word, and married Guy Forrester and his modest allowance from his uncle.

She had been false to love, honour, truth, and the dictates of her own heart. And what had she gained by it? Nearly seven years of luxury, in which she knew she was despised by all women more noble than herself—seven years of fine clothes, gaiety and self-indulgence, and now a blank, desolate widowhood, and an income which was barely as much as (counting perquisites), she had paid her maid.

"I need not have blighted two lives," she muttered to herself one day, when she thought of all this. "I have not gained much."

She was staying with her younger sister, the wife of a struggling barrister. Mrs. Carlyle had been a girl in the school-room when Guy Forrester wooed her sister, but she had been quite old enough to despise Emmeline for her cruel perfidy; and when, two years later, her own turn came, and her father was enraged at the idea of her wedding a man whose private means were a mere trifle, she had held her own firmly.

"I shall marry Percy Carlyle or nobody," she told her father and sister. "And as it might be troublesome to you, papa, if you had to keep me always, I really think you had better let me have my own way."

She had it, and was now a blithe little matron of four years' standing. She and her husband lived at Dulwich in what Emmeline called genteel poverty; but Mrs. Carlyle considered the pretty suburban home, with two maids and a page, the extreme of luxury. When

a nursery had to be established the page was given up, and though the nursery was added to every year, Mr. Carlyle's income increased in proportion to his family, and Kate often spoke with actual pity of her wealthy sister.

There was little intercourse between them. Mrs. Carlyle had neither time nor taste for the dissipation and gaieties into which Emmeline plunged; but when the time came she and her husband were prompt in their sympathy.

"I should like to ask Emmeline here for three months," said Kate to her husband. "Should you mind, Percy?"

"Haden't you better invite her on a visit, and say nothing of its duration?"

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"In three months' time Emmeline will know her position exactly. I shouldn't like to have her with us always, and I couldn't bear to tell her so. So I think my plan is best."

And it was true. Twelve weeks would surely be sufficient for Mrs. Jenkins to decide her future plans, and it was better she should know that for that time she was a welcome guest than to go on from week to week, uncertain of her tenure.

Kate arranged it very simply.

"You must come to us at once," she told the poor young widow. "We are going to stay with Percy's people in Scotland until September, but tell them I won't let you make your home anywhere but with me."

Long before the three months were over Mrs. Carlyle rejoined at her sister's first thought. Miss Jenkins was most trying addition to their household; and for the thought the second week in September would find them free of her. He could not have treated Emmeline with the perfect courtesy he did, although the refined, simple home he was the superior to anything she could expect to find elsewhere. She was never tired of drawing comparisons between it and Mayfair; and she made Kate wait on her more than a servant there at home.

"This can't go on, Kitty," said the barrister, when he returned home late from a judicial dinner, to find his wife gazing at each other with a look of dismay. "I won't have you make a slave of it!"

"For a month we shall be in Scotland," returned Kate, smiling. "And I shall not invite Emmeline to stay with us again for a long while."

Mr. Carlyle looked embarrassed.

"I suppose she knows."

"Knows what, dear?"

"That she is not included in the next present. Eh, Kitty?"

"Yes," Mrs. Carlyle actually blushed for her sister. "I thought I had better tell her plainly your mother didn't care for strangers. She offered to keep house for us here, but I said we always shut up the villa, and had one of your clerks down to sleep in it for protection. I don't think she liked it, Percy."

"What does she mean to do?"

"I don't know. She has just had her money for the half-year. I wish it had been paid quarterly. Emmeline thinks herself quite rich with fifty pounds in her purse. She forgets it has to last till next Christmas."

"Of all the women I ever saw she seems the least fit to take care of herself. I don't want to say anything disrespectful to poor Jenkins, but the most sensible thing she could do would be to marry again."

"I think she will."

The barrister opened his eyes.

"You don't mean she has seen anyone already? You can't mean that, Katy?"

Katy shook her head.

"There was someone she cared for long ago, but he was poor. Still, you know, what she called poverty, then she would think riches now."

"But the gentleman may have changed his mind."

"I don't think so. He was desperate at first, and almost ruined himself for her sake. Then some relation paid his debts, and he went

out to some unheard-of place to seek his fortune."

"When?"

"Percy!"

"My dear, I don't see how this helps us unless we pack up Mrs. Jenkins in a parcel, label her 'this side upwards, with care,' and despatch the interesting gift to the gentleman at the unheard-of place, if you happen to know his name!"

"I do know it, and I have sent to him."

"Katy!"

The tone was not exactly of approval.

"I don't mean I wrote to him. I just sent him a newspaper with the announcement of poor Sep's death."

"Oh!"

"Was it very witty, Percy? But it couldn't be, for you are laughing."

"I am laughing at the sublimity of your faith in man's constancy, my dear. Here's a poor fellow heartlessly jilted seven years ago, and you expect him to be perfectly ready to come back to his abandoned and marry the penniless widow of the man who supplanted him!"

"It would be very nice!"

"Take the third volume in a novel, eh! What was the gentleman—you haven't told me his name?"

"Guy Forrester."

"Nephew of Lord Munnings. You don't mean it, Emmeline. Does he come?"

"Did you never hear of it?"

"I was abroad the last five years before I met you, but I remember Forrester perfectly. He was a flashman at Oxford just as I was. Dashing, and one of the best fellows going. I should be proud of him for a brother-in-law."

"You say when Lord Munnings married he brought a fortune?"

"And acquired it?"

"Not exactly. He was the secretary to the Governor of one of the colonies."

"Which one?"

"Barbadoes, I think."

Mrs. Carlyle sought out a fashionable friend, and another who was connected with the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The result was that he called his wife into his study when he got home, and said—

"Remember to tell Miss Forrester I am coming home—definitely on his way now."

Mrs. Carlyle's eyes flashed.

"He must have changed the moment he got my pleasant news."

"Is he like it, and he is a very great man. It seems he doesn't want some incipient rebellion, and he will be invited to Windsor, and thanked by the Queen. Then it is rumoured he is the author whose book, 'Have you such fame under the nom de plume of Golden Thread.' In short, young lady, he will be one of the lions of the day."

"May I tell Emmeline?"

"It can't do any harm."

Mrs. Jenkins received the tidings with a flash of triumph in her eyes.

"I shall be a great lady yet," she said, passionately, "and then, perhaps, you and your husband will regret your inhospitality in turning me into the street. The Honourable Mrs. Forrester will be able to avenge her wrongs!"

It was not a kindly speech to make to the sister who had been so tender to her in her hour of trial and bereavement; but it satisfied Katy on one point. Evidently Emmeline would not scorn Guy Forrester if he used to her a second time; she would be as thankful to accept his hand as her sister would be to see it offered.

It remained to be proved, however, whether Guy meant to offer it.

CHAPTER II.

It was a lovely day in the depth of winter; but, be it remembered, what passes for winter in the colonies hardly deserves the name in English ears.

At Maryland Islands winter meant that you could walk about without panting with the heat, and that, provided you took a sunshade, you might even venture to toil up the steep hills in the middle of the day without any particular apprehension of a sunstroke.

The sky was a cloudless blue—that particular shade of blue peculiar to the Southern hemisphere; so the countries where, instead of searching the sky anxiously, and at the sight of a cloud murmuring "Ah! more rain! how tiresome!" the slightest dimming of the azure sky leads to cheerfulness, and people say "it looks as if it might rain" much in the tone in which nurses who have watched for nights beside patients whose one chance is repose, say, as at last the breathing becomes more regular, "Ah! he will sleep now!"

Well, there was not the slightest hope of rain on the day we tell of. The sky was so bright it looked more like the sky in cheap pictures, whose blue is unnaturally vivid.

The grass was green, because it was winter, and carefully watered. The mosquitoes had disappeared, and it would be dark soon after five.

These were the only proofs of the season, and as, to the uninitiated eyes, these proofs were unnoticed, a stranger to the place seeing Guy Forrester lounging in a hammock hung between two trees in the gardens of Government House might have considered it was summer-time.

It was July, seven years after Emmeline's marriage, and as many weeks after her widowhood.

Guy's novel had fallen to the ground, and looking at the fair scene before him as one whose thoughts are very far away. Mr. Forrester was gravely reviewing the story of his past.

He could not do that without, in a manner, thinking of Emmeline, since she was so intimately connected with his past; but it would have disappointed Kate Carlyle sadly to see how swiftly he passed from Mrs. Jenkins in his mental survey, and how his thoughts lingered longest with the quaintly-dressed, old-fashioned lawyer who had come to him unexpectedly one November night he never could forget.

"Old Smith saved my life," ruminated Guy, uneasily; "there's no doubt of that. Whatever happens to me in the future I can never owe any man more than I owe him. His faith in me was wonderful! He risked his money and his faith on my bare word, and I think his confidence has been fulfilled."

Others would have said the same, for Mr. Forrester was out-and-out the most popular man in the colony. To his young secretary Sir Joshua owed the success of his rule.

Guy had plunged into public life, and shown talents for management few would have guessed lay dormant in his brain. Even in the adjacent towns of Australia his fame had spread.

People there thought him far too shining a light to be wasted in such a remote place as Maryland. Dazzling offers of advancement had come to him more than once.

The Home Government had even sounded Sir Joshua as to whether Mr. Forrester would accept an independent governorship, and the kind old man had pressed the matter on his friend.

Guy laughed.

"I shall stay with you till you go home," he said, firmly. "I can never forget your kindness to me, but I couldn't spend my life out here; at the end of your term of office I must go home."

"I should not have thought you had many ties in England. Munro treated you abominably."

"I am not anxious to return on my uncle's account, though I have always said he had a right to please himself."

"On whose account, then? not your father's?"

Guy smiled.

"You will never believe I have got over that, Sir Joshua! I don't think you would trust poor Jenkins to my mercy now, for fear I should shoot him."

"I can't help feeling curious. Now if you accepted this offer," and he touched a business-looking communication beside him, "your fortune would be made!"

"I don't want to accept anything that would keep me indefinitely from England."

"But why?"

Guy felt he must give some reason, or seem to his good old friend unkindly reserved.

"Do you remember my debts?"

"But you said they were paid."

"Aye! by a friend. I promised that friend I would return to England in seven years' time. Whatever happens I must be home next November."

"Which just suits me, as I sail in September."

It was of this conversation partly, that Guy was thinking as he lounged in his hammock, waiting the return of his servant, whom he had sent to fetch whatever the English mail had brought for him. From the day of his visit to Denmark Hill he had never heard a word of Jabez Smith. He had sent the strange old man news of his appointment, had even written to him more than once from his Colonial home, and had sent through the publishers a copy of every book which bore the name of "Golden Thread" (Mr. Carlyle had been quite right in his statement, this was Guy's *non de plume*) to his peculiar benefactor, but no word of acknowledgment had ever reached him.

"He's a queer old boy!" mused the young Secretary. "Sometimes it seems to me that half-hour at Denmark Hill must have been a dream. I reflected at the time I was paying a terrible price for the money to set me free, but I can't say so far my secret has weighed heavily on me. These years out here have been of perfect tranquil happiness, save for the perplexity of Smith's silence, and the embarrassment of kind Sir Joshua's repeated attempts to lure me into the bonds of matrimony. I really have had a charming time; never did exile pass more pleasantly. Something must be done now since in less than two months I shall have started for England. I think I had better write to Jabez, and ask what he'd like me to do when I get to England. I really feel tremendously nervous when I think of it; but, after all, I daresay it's nothing terrible. Anyway, I must have remembered that but for the old fellow's coming to me that November night I should have died by a suicide's hand, and that now I can look the whole world in the face and feel but for those months of folly I have done nothing unworthy a Forrester of Ardmore."

"I suppose I shall have to settle in England, but I shouldn't at all mind another term in one of the colonies. Well, it won't depend only on my wishes, Smith's must be consulted as well. I suppose a year or two at home, and a season in London, will seem to him indispensable. I wish the next six months comfortably over. Ha!" as a man came up to him, "is the mail in, Hawkins?"

It was, judging from the burden Hawkins carried—a huge bundle of newspapers, a parcel of books, and half-a-dozen letters. He seemed to know his master's habits. Bringing a small wicker table he deposited papers and books on it, well within reach of Guy's hand; then giving his master the letters he would have withdrawn, but a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and diving into his pocket he produced another envelope, which bore neither stamp nor postmark, and was very different in appearance from the letters Mr. Forrester was even then examining.

"I beg your pardon, sir; a cablegram. I had almost forgotten it."

We are most of us apt to connect telegrams with disaster. How much more than those costly messages which are flashed to us by wires laid beneath the ocean, and mostly cost

as many pounds as their humbler English cousins do pence!

Guy took it up mechanically, then he waited. He was a man of few intimacies; his literary pursuits would never need a cablegram on their account; his estate in Leeny had been left entirely to Mr. Smith's management, and if Woodlake had got on perfectly for seven years without a letter respecting it being addressed to its master, surely it could not necessitate a cablegram now?

"I had better open it," thought Guy, "but I feel as if it were bringing trouble in its wake."

He tore the message open, and lifted his brows, as he perceived the sender was a lawyer of repute, whose fame was well known to him, but with whom he had never exchanged a word.

"Jabez Smith dead; yourself sole executor. Return at once, or cable instructions. Property immense; over half-a-million!"

Poor Guy! There was nothing terrible in the missive, since it only announced the death of a man well-nigh a stranger to him, and whom he had not seen or heard of for seven years.

Perhaps the duties of an executor were peculiarly troublesome in his opinion; perhaps he shrank from the responsibility involved. Certainly he looked more troubled than anyone at Maryland had ever seen him.

He put the message in his pocket and turned to the letters. Three were merely business matters, bill of lading of a case he expected out, receipts for money sent; these he pushed aside, and turned to the remaining three, to perceive one was addressed in the crabbed characters of the man of whose death he had just heard.

It was the first communication from one who had saved his life, and it was the last he could ever hear of the kind old lawyer. It had a double sacredness in Guy's eyes, since he knew the fingers which had penned it were cold in death.

The young man hesitated a moment, and then turned to read the letter from the grave; he had no need for fear.

Jabez Smith wrote to congratulate his protégé. He said he had watched Guy's career, and he was more than satisfied; he had trusted him blindly, and his trust was fulfilled. The conclusion of the letter touched Guy to the heart.

"I am an old man, and I give many signs of breaking. It may be I shall not live to see you return—as I know you will return—next November—that when you reach Acacia Lodge it will be to find its master dead. In that case I beg you to remember two things—that I trusted you as though you had been my own son; and the child I leave to your care is the dearest thing to me on earth. On her I have cherished the love of a lifetime; in my eyes she is simply perfection, in yours she may have many faults. If this be so be pitiful to her; remember, when I am gone, she has not a relation in the world, not a creature but yourself on whom she has a claim."

"Make my darling happy, and any service I may have been able to render you is amply repaid. One word more. I am a rich man, far richer than you have dreamed of, and my money was honestly made, every penny of it. I have not left it to the child, but to you. You are a Forrester of Ardmore; I can trust to you not to see her wronged, and you are a proud man. It seems to me it would prejudice you against my little one were she known as an heiress."

"I would fain live to claim your promise and yield up my charge to you, but old age is creeping on apace, and I may not last till November; if not, be tender with her grief; make her happy, and an old man's blessing shall rest upon you both."

Guy felt a tear tremble in his eye as he read the touching lines. Of course he would be tender to the orphan girl thus entrusted to his care; of course he would do his utmost to comfort her. Evidently the third condition on

which Mr. Jabez Smith had paid Guy's debts was clear now; he had wanted to secure a guardian for his grandchild when he should be no more. He had looked forward to the time when Mr. Forrester would be a grave, earnest man of seven-and-thirty, bronzed by foreign sun, and quite capable of playing mentor, friend, and adviser to a young girl. Of course that was it; but, if so, surely never guardian had looked more perplexed and anxious as he had of his trust than did Guy Forrester on being reminded of his seven-year-old promise.

Poor Guy! He had had his doubts seven years ago whether he was not bringing a great trouble upon his life; but the free, happy time he had spent out of England, his utter absence from all care, all responsibility, had made him at times well-nigh forget the promise and all it involved.

"I must speak to the dear old chief," he said to himself, gravely. "I can't tell him all, but I don't think he'll stand in my way."

But the other letters had to be read. One with the Ardmore postmark obtained the precedence. It was from Lord Munro, and announced the death of his only son, Viscount Forrester. The peer told his nephew his youngest child was now six years old. Twin babies had been born in the first twelve months of his married life, no others had followed them; and since little Lady Dorothea could inherit neither title nor estate there seemed an almost certainty that some day Guy would find himself Lord Munro of Ardmore. The Earl wrote that he was ageing fast, that at nearly seventy his work was well-nigh over, and he urged his nephew strongly to come back and make his home at the grand old place which must now, it seemed, surely be some day his own.

"They all say the same thing," murmured Guy. "Come home. Now I wonder what that is?" and he touched the last remaining letter. "I never saw the writing, and the postmark being London tells nothing at all. It would be strange if this was another supplication to return to England."

It was nothing of the sort. Guy read it through with a strange mingling of amusement and surprise.

"Acacia Lodge,
Denmark Hill.

"DEAR SIR,

"Grandfather is writing to ask you to come home to take care of me. I beg you to do nothing of the sort. I am perfectly able to take care of myself and him, and I have not the least intention of being handed over to you like a parcel or portmanteau in the helpless fashion in which some girls like to be transferred from one male relative to another because they feel incompetent for the care of themselves.

"So far as I am concerned you need never think a second time of your promise to my grandfather. He wanted to secure a protector for me, and I positively refuse to have one. I am not a child or even a very young woman; I am three-and-twenty, and quite reliable; therefore I hope you will not trouble yourself to come to England on my account. Someone has sent us a lot of trashy novels, and grandfather says they are by you. I don't approve of fiction at all. To my mind there are quite enough books already, but if you must write any more, a treatise on Women's Rights or men's delinquencies was much more needed. I have every intention of embracing a parliamentary career myself, and when women are admitted to sit in the House of Commons—which they soon must be if right and honour triumph, as of course they will—I think of representing Camberwell, which, no doubt by that time will return a member of its own. If when you are quite old—men grow old very soon in hot climates, I believe—you are returning to England on business of your own, I shall have no objection to making your acquaintance, but I firmly refuse to be your charge or to submit myself in any way to your authority; therefore, to hasten your

journey to England on my account would be the height of absurdity.

"I have the honour to be,

"Yours truly,

"ANASTASIA SMITH."

Mr. Forrester's hair literally stood on end. Like many more of his order he detested masculine girls, and the upholders of Women's Rights were his sworn foes. He was quite ready to hate Anastasia as much as she could desire, and to leave her to protect herself; but then, on the other hand, a promise was a most sacred thing, and the peculiar circumstances under which he had pledged himself to Jabez Smith to care for his granddaughter made the pledge even more binding on his conscience.

"How could he do it?" muttered poor Guy, thinking reproachfully of the dead man. "How could he let her grow into that? Why, I would have looked her up in one room, and kept her on bread and water, rather than she should have become that awful creature—half man, half woman, and the poor fellow actually calls her his darling, his poor lonely girl, and admits he thinks her perfection! Oh! he must have been mad. I told him so seven years ago, and I am quite sure of it now."

"He must be mad," reflected Guy, "and perhaps Anastasia is too, but that doesn't absolve me from my promise, whatever happens afterwards. I must go home at once, and come to some sort of understanding with her."

Miss Smith had informed him she was twenty-three, and he knew perfectly that wardship mostly ceases two years before that age. He was also aware that guardians often rid themselves of distasteful trusts by providing husbands for their objectionable wards; but Guy never dreamt of finding a partner for Anastasia, or of dreaming her age freed him from his responsibilities.

"It was the most dangerous thing I could possibly have done; and yet, if the time came over again, I should do just the same; but Jabez Smith might have influenced her a little, and made his grandchild into something decent."

Sir Joshua started, when the young secretary entered the drawing-room, and pleaded for immediate leave of absence.

"My dear boy, you can't marry her yet; her husband's not been dead two months!"

"I don't want to marry anyone," said Guy, a little savagely. It must be confessed Sir Joshua's remark was *mal à propos*. "I really think you and her ladyship never fancy I have an idea beyond wedding rings."

"I thought when you said a friend's death recalled you to England you meant Mr. Jenkins?" said poor Sir Joshua, mildly.

"He isn't dead."

"I have just read the announcement in the *Times*," said the chief, sagely.

"Well, I didn't know it. Sir Joshua, I have come into a lot of money, something like half-a-million; and the lawyers say they can't get on without me."

"Good gracious! Half-a-million, and you are sure it is not a hoax?" Sir Joshua said, sitting down and clasping his hands.

"Positive; my benefactor is the man who paid my debts seven years ago."

"He must have been very fond of you!"

"I never asked him to be," said Guy, thinking a little bitterly of all that July fancy was likely to cost him; "but he was a sterling good fellow, and as he's left me executor, and there's a lot of business to see to, I really should like to go home at once."

"I don't see why you shouldn't start by the next steamer," returned Sir Joshua, warmly. "Of course I shall miss you terribly, but the new Governor arrives next week, and I can turn over the hard work to him. It won't be much over a month before I follow you."

"A thousand thanks. I shall never forget all I owe to you, Sir Joshua."

"It seems to me you owe a great deal more to your unknown friend. By the way, Guy, surely he had a name?"

"Of course he had," said Guy, shortly. "His name was—Smith!"

Poor Sir Joshua's anxiety was sadly tried. "Perhaps he had a beautiful daughter who had lost her heart to you, and begged him to befriend you?" suggested the romantic chief.

"He was a childless widower when I first knew him," retorted Guy, "and I have never heard of his changing his condition."

"Half-a-million of money! You'll be a richer man than Lord Munro."

"That reminds me I heard from my uncle. His poor little boy is dead, and he wants me to come and live at Ardmore."

"Hasn't he any more children?"

"One, a daughter, aged six."

"Six!" cried Sir Joshua, starting his pet project, "and you're three-and-twenty. I'm afraid it's too great a disparity."

"My dear godfather," cried Guy, growing almost sorrowful in his earnestness, and stroking his moustache, "won't you believe my solemn word? What object can I have in deceiving you? Why won't you trust me when I tell you that I shall never marry."

"It seems so absurd."

"It is rational."

"You may meet with some charming creature and forget all your protestations. I believe you will fall desperately in love some day."

"Heaven forbid," said poor Guy, with unnecessary vehemence. "If you live to be a hundred, Sir Joshua, you'll never be able to see my wedding; and as to falling in love, if I thought myself capable of such folly I'd never speak to a woman again."

Sir Joshua sighed.

"Well, my lad, it is your only fault, that I can see, and time may mend it. Anyway, don't let us quarrel, specially now, when in a few days we part for such a long voyage. I'll let well alone and not introduce the subject; but I own I shall feel sorry if you fall into that woman's toils again."

"Meaning Mrs. Jenkins," said Guy, lightly. "be easy, Sir Joshua, I never shall."

(To be continued.)

A GOLDEN DESTINY.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HOWEVER relieved Marjorie's conscience might have been at the idea of having no clandestine correspondence with Roy Fraser, it cannot be said that she felt altogether happy at his continued silence, and therefore it was with a joyfully beating heart and heightened colour that she found a letter on her dressing-table when she got home, in a handwriting which she knew to be his.

There was no danger of her letters being seen by her father when they came by the afternoon post, and it was, doubtless for this reason that Roy had timed its arrival by the second delivery.

She dismissed her maid, looked her door, and then sat down to read her welcome missive, first of all covering the envelope with shy kisses, and pressing it to her heart as if it had been a sentient thing, conscious of her caresses.

How she loved Roy! How dear he was to her! Dearer a thousand times than she had ever confessed to him!

Then she tore it open, and read its contents—once, twice, three times!

As she read the soft rose flush faded from her cheek, the lovelight died from her eyes, her whole demeanour underwent a change, and the lips which had been tremulous with a happy smile grew white and rigid, for, instead of the words of affection she had naturally expected, she read what follows:—

"MY DEAR MISS WYNDHAM.—Since our last interview, and my knowledge of your changed

position I have been thinking over our semi-engagement, and have come to the conclusion that it is a great mistake, and the sooner it is put an end to the better it will be for both of us.

"I, as you know, am not in a position to keep a wife, for my income is very small, and there is no prospect of its getting larger for some little time.

"Of course when you were an heiress it was a very different matter, as your money would have been sufficient for both of us, but now that you are, as regards finances, no better off than myself, I feel it would be selfish towards you, and unjust to your truest interests if I were to ask you to hold yourself bound to me.

"I hope you will not judge too harshly of my conduct or think I have behaved badly in thus releasing you, but I assure you, my dear Miss Wyndham, that it is as much for your good as my own, and in after years you will be quite ready to confess it.

"I am older than you, and know the world better than you do, and experience has taught me that 'love in a cottage' is a theory which fails when reduced to practice.

"I, at least, should be afraid of trying the experiment, and I am unwilling that you should run the risk either. In bidding you farewell I wish you all the happiness that I know you deserve, and subscribe myself yours very sincerely,

"ROY FRASER."

Poor Marjorie! For some time she could not realise what was meant, but as comprehension broke upon her she grew still paler and paler, and her form became as rigid as if it had been carved from a block of marble.

This, then, was the end of Roy's ardent protestations, his vows of love, and promises of faith!

It was her fortune he had cared for, not herself; and when he found that the fortune was in jeopardy he had wisely withdrawn, so as to run no risk of being burdened with a penniless bride!

And she had thought him so noble, so honourable, and disinterested—so far above all mercenary considerations!

Suddenly she sprang to her feet, and, throwing the letter on the ground, stamped upon it in a passionate access of angry indignation.

"I will not weep for the loss of such a lover; rather should I rejoice that I have escaped his clutches, even if I lose my inheritance as well!" she exclaimed aloud; and then, as if to give her the lie, a storm of tears fell from her eyes, and sobs shook her frame—great anguished sobs, such as her young life had never known before.

When she grew a little calmer she took up the letter and read it again, and, as she read, the remembrance of Roy's manly face and brave bearing came upon her.

She recalled his words of love and the truthfulness that had been in his grey eyes when he uttered them, and a doubt assailed her whether, after all, the letter could be his, or was only a forgery.

She examined it again, animated by this hope, but, alas! there was no room for doubt, for the writing was certainly his, and his signature was too peculiar a one to be imitated.

"And I would have been true to him—aye, faithful even unto death!" she exclaimed aloud, in the bitterness of her humiliation. "It would have mattered nothing to me whether he was rich or poor, of good repute or ill repute, so long as he loved me. Oh, Roy, Roy!"

Presently pride came to her aid, and she rose and bathed her face and eyes, so as to take from them all traces of tears; then she looked up in her desk the letter that had brought her such a cruel disenchantment, and changed her dress herself, not daring to send for her maid to help her, conscious that that young person's keen eyes would have quickly discovered that she had been crying.

After this she went downstairs into the drawing-room, where the Squire and Geoffrey were awaiting her before going in to dinner.

"By the way, Marjorie, I saw a friend of yours yesterday afternoon, and forgot to tell you about it," observed her father.

"Indeed," listlessly. "Who was it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No," she returned, taking up a fan of peacock feathers and holding it between her face and the light.

It was lucky for her that she had taken this precaution, for the Squire's next words were calculated to try her self-control.

"It was that young architect whom we both liked so much, Roy Fraser."

The peacock's fan trembled, but Marjorie said nothing, although she was miserably conscious that Geoffrey's eyes were upon her.

"Yes," went on the Squire; "I was passing the Lodge when you should come out but young Fraser and Mrs. Fanning. I suppose they are friends—at any rate, they seemed to be talking very earnestly together, and when they saw me both looked very much confused. Not that they need have minded," added the Squire, with a chuckle. "I was young myself once, and haven't forgotten my love-making days."

"Do you think they were making love, then?" asked Geoffrey; and Marjorie felt actually grateful to him for filling up a pause which she herself would have been incapable of breaking.

"Looked uncommonly like it. Her hand was on his arm, and he was looking down into her eyes."

"A lover-like attitude, certainly," laughed Geoffrey. "Did you get a good view of the lady's face?"

"Yes, very good; and, by Jove! she is an extremely handsome woman! Dark and foreign-looking, but with magnificent eyes. My impression is she must be a Spaniard."

"Very likely," responded the younger man, with indifference. "Spanish women are very handsome when they are young, but they don't wear well. For my part, I think there is no beauty to beat that of English women, and, what is greatly to the point, it lasts longer than any other."

He emphasised the compliment with a glance at Marjorie, but, as her eyes were bent on the ground, it passed unobserved.

"I expect," said the Squire, pursuing his train of thought, "that it was Fraser who told Mrs. Fanning about the Lodge, and, if so, the mystery of her coming and taking a house in such an out-of-the-way spot, is partly explained. It is quite clear she must have had some motive for burying herself alive in that damp little cottage."

"Women are strange creatures," observed Geoffrey, philosophically. "They are just as likely to do odd things from no reason at all as from the clearest and most powerful motives. Perhaps, however, she and Mr. Fraser are going to be married soon, and wish to keep the affair quiet. I heard from one of the gamekeepers that the lady had not been left a widow long, and maybe she wishes to prevent her friends from seeing how soon she throws off her weeds."

The entrance of the butler announcing dinner created a welcome diversion, so far as Marjorie was concerned; but although she contrived to answer when she was spoken to, and otherwise behave herself as usual, her brain was in a tumult, and she was longing intensely for the conclusion of the meal, when she would be able to get away, and think over what she had heard.

Not for a moment did she doubt the truth of what her father had said—he was too upright and honourable a man to have told, or even countenanced, a lie, no matter what the temptation might have been.

"How pale you are, Marjorie!" exclaimed the Squire, presently; "and you are not eating anything. Aren't you well?"

"Oh, yes, no, not quite well," she rejoined, incoherently.

"Yes, no, not quite well! Now, what may that mean?" he said, comically. "Reduced into plain English, does it signify you have a headache?"

"Something like that," returned the girl, with a faint smile, and seizing on the excuse as gladly as a drowning man catches hold of a straw.

She felt grateful to Geoffrey that he did not persecute her with inquiries, but he was a man of very considerable tact, and was quite aware that in this case silence would help him most.

After dinner she went into the grounds, and seated herself under a tulip tree in the rose-garden, pushing her hair back from her brows so that the soft evening breezes might cool her heated temples. Overhead the star flowers had blossomed into silvery beauty, in the blue meadows of the sky, and a young crescent moon was visible above the treetops. An evening silence reigned over the house and gardens, broken only by the falling of the water in the marble basin of the fountain, where it plashed musically amongst the broad, green, lily leaves.

Could the Squire's idea be true, and was Roy really in love with the mysterious lady who had taken the Lodge? Perhaps it was for her sake the young man had broken off his engagement, and rather than confess how his fickle fancy had roved, he had preferred to attribute the change to Marjorie's prospective loss of fortune.

The girl recalled Mrs. Fanning's words,—"Your love is false, false, false!"

Had those words been spoken in ignorance or was she aware of the relations that had existed between her and the young architect? If the latter, then her warning had been made with a distinct purpose in view, and her strange desire to see Marjorie's face was also explained.

The girl groaned aloud in her humiliation. That she, who had been so proud and cold to her other wooers, who had come down from her pedestal to tell a man—very much her social inferior—that she loved him, and was willing to sacrifice wealth, position, everything, for his sake; that she should have her love flung back in her face, while he calmly transferred his affections to another woman, was an idea that nearly maddened her.

Acting on an impulse, she went into the library, and took a sheet of paper on which she wrote her reply to his letter.

"I release you from every promise you ever made me, and I earnestly hope I shall never see you again."

This she signed, put into an envelope, and then went into the hall, and slipped it in the post-bag, which was taken to the Squire every evening to be sealed, but at whose contents it was very unlikely he would glance.

As she turned away she nearly came into collision with Geoffrey, who was crossing the hall from the dining-room.

"I beg your pardon," he said, laughing at the contretemps. "I was just going out into the garden to find you. Will you take a turn with me under the starlight?"

She acquiesced, listlessly, more because it seemed easier to accept than to refuse, and he, with a tender care—which she was too unobservant of to resent—wrapped round her a fleecy wool shawl which was lying on the hall stand.

"Precious things are scarce," he observed, as they went out, and down the steps into the rose-garden, where the air was laden with the scent of the drowsy, dew-wet flowers, and the moonlight glanced with an opaline radiance, athwart the waters of the fountain.

"What a lovely night!" he observed. "We don't get many like it in this foggy England, and so it behoves one to take advantage of it. Miss Marjorie," he changed his tone suddenly, and came to a full stop in front of her. "I can see that you are, for some reason, unhappy, and I cannot tell you what pain the

knowledge gives me. Will you for once treat me as a friend—a brother—and let me help you?"

She shook her head, with rather a bitter smile.

"You cannot help me. No one can help me!"

Then, recollecting herself, she added, quickly, and with a forced gaiety that was infinitely sad,—

"It is not possible to assist anyone in bearing a very bad headache, is it?"

"No, but it is possible to share a headache, and, in so doing, render it the more easily borne," he rejoined. "Forgive me if I intrude my sympathy, but I was fearing that your trouble might be due to the fact of my presence here, and your fear of the Squire being turned out of his old home."

Certainly Mr. Geoffrey Wyndham was a most consummate liar, and an excellent actor, for nothing could have been more respectfully subdued than his voice and manner.

"And," he continued, without giving her time to speak, "I want to reassure you on that point, and to show you a way by which all difficulties may be smoothed over, and your father's position rendered perfectly safe. May I ask for your undivided attention for a quarter of an hour?"

Marjorie, somewhat surprised at the tone the conversation was assuming, signified assent by an acquiescent nod; and thereupon he led her, strangely enough, to the very seat beneath the tulip tree which she had occupied a quarter of an hour ago.

"I will not deny that my first intention was to take possession of the estates, and become sole master of them at once," he began, watching her fair face, which the moonlight illumined, as he spoke; "and it is unnecessary to tell you that as it is perfectly impossible to resist my claim, your father would have had no alternative but to give them up whenever I chose to demand them. Since my arrival here, an influence has been at work which I am powerless to resist, and which may have the effect of altering all my plans. In three words I can give you a summary of that influence, and they are—I love you!"

CHAPTER XVII.

As Geoffrey made his declaration, Marjorie half rose from her seat with a gesture of indignation, but he put a detaining hand on her arm.

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?" she demanded, with the air of hauteur he had grown to know so well.

"Insult you! No. A man never insults a woman by telling her he loves her, or by asking her to become his wife. On the contrary, he pays her the highest compliment it is in his power to bestow."

"It is a compliment I must beg to decline," then, said the young girl, shaking herself free from his clasp, and standing before him, tall, fair, and pale in the moonlight.

"Do you mean, then, that you refuse me?"

"I do mean it, most distinctly."

"Ah!" Geoffrey drew a long breath. "I cannot say that your answer surprises me, for I hardly expected it would be different; and it seemed very probable that I should have to explain matters to you before you would see that you were taking a wrong view of them."

"Nothing that you could say would alter my decision."

"Wait a minute, if you please, fair cousin. First of all, let me tell you that your father is perfectly aware of my affection for you, and would readily consent to your marrying me—nay, it is his ardent desire that you should become my wife."

Marjorie grew paler, and her lips trembled a little.

"Is this true?"

"Quite true, as he will tell you if you ask him."

"I shall not ask him. It is not necessary to refer to the subject again, seeing that nothing would induce me to marry you."

"Don't commit yourself to rash assertions," said Geoffrey, with a slow laugh, that jarred discordantly on her ear. "Perhaps, after you have heard all I have to say, you may not be quite so positive. I have told you I loved you, and my one great object in life, if I became your husband, would be to make you happy; but pray understand that I am a man of some determination, who has generally succeeded in getting what he wanted, and who is now resolved that he will make you his wife. I tell you this in order that you may not think too harshly of his method of wooing. Well, then, to come to the point, the situation is just this. If you marry me I shall execute a deed by which your father will be left in possession of the Wyndham estates during his life, and no one will ever know that he is not their rightful owner; but if, on the other hand, you persist in your refusal, I shall take possession of them myself, and you and your father will be homeless and penniless."

It was, as he observed, a strange kind of wooing, and for a moment Marjorie looked at him in silence, infinite scorn lighting the depths of her lustrous eyes, and curling her scarlet lips.

"Do you think I am the sort of girl to yield to threats?" she asked, contemptuously.

"No," he returned, with an air of quiet conviction; "but I think that your filial love will prove greater than your selfish inclination, and you will yield for your father's sake, when you would not for your own."

Something either in his words or the tranquil assurance with which they were uttered struck her with a sense of inquietude, and her eyes fell, while her fingers twined themselves nervously in and out of each other.

Geoffrey saw the advantage he had gained, and pursued it.

"I am aware that in thus bringing outside pressure to bear upon you I run the risk of making you despise me, but you really leave me no alternative. I need not bring forward any arguments to convince you of my motives being perfectly disinterested, for your father has confessed that his solicitors declare he has not the shadow of a chance of gaining his cause if he goes to law with me, as they are convinced my claim is just, and so you see that I am really entreating a penniless bride. But I love you, Marjorie"—his voice changed, and became instinct with real feeling—"I love you so dearly that I would make any sacrifice for your sake!"

"Except the one which would be of any use to me!" she rejoined, bitterly. "Oh!" she threw out her hands with a gesture of intensest scorn, "I had no idea a man could be so base, so mean, as you have proved yourself!"

"You must think of me as you will now; but if you will only give me a chance, the future shall prove how mistaken your present judgment is."

"I hope that in the future I shall have no sort of connection with you!" she exclaimed.

"Your arguments and sophistries have been of no avail. Do what you will—I will never become your wife!"

She was turning away when she came to a sudden pause, for there, a few yards before her, stood the Squire, who had come out in search of her.

"Marjorie, my dear, come indoors, and give us some music," he said, advancing nearer.

"Ah! Geoffrey, is that you?"

"It is, sir."

"I was not aware you were here. I thought that, as a rule, you objected to the night air?"

"So I do, as a rule; but all rules have their exceptions, and this evening I wanted particularly to speak to your daughter."

His tone was so significant that it seemed to

convey some meaning to the Squire, who glanced inquiringly from him to Marjorie.

"What has happened?" he asked, in a lowered tone.

"This. I have made an offer to Miss Marjorie."

"And she?"

"Has refused me."

Marjorie looked up with some anxiety, and she saw her father's face cloud over as if with disappointment.

"Still," went on Geoffrey, "I shall not take this decision as final, and I shall put my question again in a week's time, when I shall hope for a favourable answer. Perhaps you, sir"—he turned to the Squire, significantly—"may be able to persuade your daughter to look more kindly on my suit."

And with this he walked quietly away, leaving father and daughter alone in the moonlight.

For some minutes neither spoke; then the Squire, taking Marjorie's small, cold hand between his, said in an agitated voice,—

"Can you not make up your mind to like him, my child? I believe he is truly fond of you."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed the girl, throwing herself on his breast. "He cannot be fond of me, or he would not try to coerce me."

The Squire sighed deeply. He felt himself in a most difficult situation, for on the one hand he had no desire to force Marjorie's inclinations, and on the other he could see no way out of their dilemma unless she became Geoffrey's wife.

"Papa," said Marjorie, who seemed intuitively to read his thoughts, "Is there no doubt that he is the heir?"

"No doubt, at all, my dear."

"And is what he says true—namely, that your solicitors refuse to support you if he brings a law suit against you?"

"Quite true."

There was a pause, during which Marjorie found herself watching the play of the moonlight on the glossy laurel foliage, and wondering how it was the roses and mignonette smelt so much sweeter at night than in the daytime. Her brain seemed almost dazed under the strain that the events of the last few hours had put upon it.

"Tell me this, papa," she said at length, and her voice sounded harsh and unnatural. "Shall we have any money at all of our own if this man fulfils his threat, and takes the estates?"

"None at all—not a penny piece more than he likes to give us. Oh, Marjorie! I had been hoping that you could—would have grown to care for him, and then our inheritance need never have passed away from us!"

A shudder of repulsion thrilled through the girl's frame, but the Squire was too agitated by his own thoughts to observe it.

He had no intention of bringing undue influence to bear upon her—would have scorned the idea, indeed; but it was hard for him to draw the line between his own desires and her free will.

When we grow old, love seems a very slight and trivial thing compared with what it did in our youth; and the Squire did not look upon it as a necessary accompaniment of matrimony.

It seemed to him that if she did not actually dislike Geoffrey there was no reason why she should not marry him, and thus preserve the position to which she had been born.

"It is hard to face poverty at my age—very, very hard," he muttered, unconsciously speaking aloud; and Marjorie heard the words, and understood the line of thought that had prompted them.

No entreaties that he could have uttered would have moved her as did that spoken soliloquy, for she saw that he was constraining himself not to influence her more than he could help.

As has already been said, she was devotedly attached to her father, and had been all her life.

It seemed easy to make for him a sacrifice that nothing would have induced her to make for herself, especially when she saw in what direction his wishes were tending, and yet—even as the words of self-renunciation trembled on her lips they died away unuttered.

"Let me think," she said, sitting down, and leaning her aching head on her hand. "Don't go away, papa, and I will try and decide what I had better do."

For fully half-an-hour she sat there quite still, and as immovable as a statue, while a struggle, whose agony no words can ever describe, went on within her.

She knew that, badly as Roy Fraser had behaved to her, she still loved him better than anyone else in the wide world, and that if he had been true to her, not even for her father, would she have sacrificed him.

But he had not been true to her. He had, in plain English, jilted her for the sake of some other woman whom he cared for more; and he made no disguise of the fact that it was Marjorie's fortune which had attracted him, although at their last interview he had indignantly denied that it would make any difference to his feelings or affection.

Well, it was quite clear that she would never care for anyone else again, and, this being the case, did it matter much whom she married?

If she had her choice, she would prefer marrying no one at all, but when the choice lay before her, whether her father should be driven forth from his boyhood's home, penniless and miserable, to face the world in his old age, surely it was her duty to save him from such a fate!

"Papa," she said at last, and she spoke very quietly, and, as it seemed, with a total absence of emotion, "I have made up my mind."

"Well?" he asked.

"I answered Geoffrey Wyndham too hurriedly; and if he puts the same question to me again, I shall give a different reply."

"You will accept him?"

"Yes," in the same dull, quiet tone.

"Oh, Marjorie! if you could but know what a load you have lifted from my mind!" exclaimed the Squire, catching her in his arms, and kissing her pale lips over and over again. "I could not force you, but it would have been terrible, if we had had to go forth as strangers from the home where you were born. I am not so young now as I was once, and less able to bear troubles. I think, my dear, it would have killed me."

He was so overcome with emotion that he had to sit down, but Marjorie said never a word.

"Geoffrey loves you, he will be good to you, I am sure," pursued her father, eagerly, "and in time you will get to like him. I did not care for him at first, it is true; but I was prejudiced, and now I think him a good fellow, and a pleasant fellow into the bargain. Oh, I am sure he will make you happy—sure of it!"

And still Marjorie said nothing.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is now time to return to Irene, who, as we have seen, had left the Dower House on the very morning of her interview with Lord St. Croix, accompanied by Mrs. Henry, or, in other words, with Mrs. Seymour's maid, Sumner.

She had been given no time for preparation, but this would have been no great inconvenience in itself, as she had no luggage to get ready; her wardrobe, which was of the scantiest possible description, having been left behind in her hasty flight from the convent.

Indeed, Mrs. Henry made this an excuse for taking her away, but it must be confessed that she was astonished at the reluctance manifested by the young girl to leave the Dower House.

"I want to take you up to London, in order to buy some clothes for you," she said; "and as we have not very much time to catch the train, you must put your things on as quickly as possible."

"Are we coming back to-night?" questioned Irene, with a slight flush.

"I don't know. It is possible, but I cannot say for certain. Why?" added the woman, with a sharp glance of suspicion. "Do you want particularly to come back to-night?"

"Oh, no!"

"It seems to me you have grown reconciled to this place," said Mrs. Henry, still watching her as she put on her hat and cloak. "And yet it must be duller than the convent, for there, at least, you had girls of your own age to speak to."

Irene did not answer. It would have been difficult to explain the reasons that had made her grow to like her solitary residence; and, besides, there was not much time for conversation, for Mrs. Henry was evidently in a fever of impatience that they should be gone.

They rowed across the lake to the other side, and then, after ten minutes' walk through the plantation, found themselves in the high road where a closed fly was in waiting.

Into this they got, and were driven rapidly away until they came to Blackminster Station, and there Mrs. Henry took tickets for London—taking care, however, that she did not loose Irene's arm until they were safely in the railway-carriage.

"Find us a compartment to ourselves, and lock the door when we are in!" she whispered to the guard; and that functionary, rendered very obsequious by the half-crown pressed into his hand, did as he was desired.

Mrs. Henry sank back against the cushions—for they were in a first-class carriage—with a sigh of relief, as if an arduous and disagreeable duty were nearly done.

"There!" she exclaimed, as the train moved slowly out of the station, "now we are safe from observation, and you may remove your veil if you like."

It should be mentioned that before leaving the island she had produced a thick black gossamer veil, which she had tied over the girl's face, and on permission being given her, Irene gladly raised it.

As she did so an idea seemed to strike her, and she said, with some curiosity,—

"Why are you afraid of anyone seeing me?"

"Who told you I was afraid of anyone seeing you?" was Mrs. Henry's counter question, while she bit her lip with annoyance at the girl's penetration.

"Your own actions," tranquilly responded Irene, who was too fearless and innocent to attempt any disguise. "Evidently you were afraid of my being seen at the Dower House, and equally afraid when we left it, otherwise you would not have made me put on that horrid veil."

Mrs. Henry was silent. It was difficult to answer such questions as these, and, to her relief, Irene did not seem inclined to press her inquiries, but lay back in her corner, dreamily watching the landscape as it flitted past.

It was not an agreeable day. Heavy clouds of a dull, leaden hue hung low in the air, and a drizzling rain presently began to fall, blotting out the trees and fields in a flying mist, that made even the railway-carriage feel damp and uncomfortable.

"You are very meditative," observed Mrs. Henry, at last, when more than half their journey was accomplished. "What are you thinking of?"

Irene roused herself with a start.

"I was wondering," she said, slowly, "whether there were many girls with lives like mine! If there are I am sorry for them."

"Why?"

"Because there must be good things in life, and they have missed them. I am not grumbling—I do not even wish to complain—

but I have heard of such things as mother's love and a father's devotion, and home ties, which must be very sweet to those that possess them. I know nothing of these things, but I have often dreamed of them."

As she said, she was not grumbling, and there was no fretfulness in the sweet, tranquil voice—only a mournful cadence that was infinitely pathetic.

Mrs. Henry's brows contracted. Did her conscience give her a twinge as she thought of all the happiness from which she had helped to snatch this fair young life?

Perhaps so. Few of us are so hardened as not to have occasional moments of repentance. Alas! that they vanish so quickly!

She did not speak again until they reached Paddington, which looked gloomier, and grimmer, and more desolate than usual, in the clinging dampness of the small, fine rain.

Here Mrs. Henry took a cab, and they drove to the Army and Navy Stores, where she bought several articles of clothing for her charge, all of a scrupulously plain description.

Irene watched the purchases without manifesting any particular degree of interest. Like all girls of her age, she liked pretty things; but these were not pretty things, and the prospect of wearing them gave her no pleasurable anticipations.

After the shopping was concluded, they had dinner at the stores, and then got into another cab, taking with them the trunk containing the clothing, and were again driven through the London streets. In giving the cabman directions where to go, Mrs. Henry had lowered her voice, so that Irene did not hear their destination.

From Victoria-street they drove along the Embankment and passed the very spot where she had first met and spoken to St. Croix. The remembrance came upon her with vivid distinctness, followed by a rush of gratitude for the kindness he had then and since showed her.

Perhaps it was because she was so occupied with these reminiscences, that she did not pay particular attention to where they were being driven. She only knew that, on leaving the Embankment, they passed through crowded city streets, where men were hurrying to and fro, and great buildings loomed up, tall and smoke-darkened, into the grey sky.

Then came a long, straight road which seemed interminable; the buildings grew dingier, the people they passed looked paler and more poorly dressed; in effect, they were in the East-end of the city, and when they stopped it was before a small, semi-gentle sort of house, facing a high brick wall, and not far off the docks.

"What place is this?" Irene asked, shrinking back with a very natural movement of repugnance as she descended from the cab, while Mrs. Henry paid the cabman—liberally as it seemed, for he drove off with a satisfied expression of countenance.

"It is the house of a friend of mine who has kindly asked us to stay the night," replied Mrs. Henry, ringing the bell. "I am too fatigued to bear the journey back home."

The door was opened by a woman of about the speaker's own age, not a pleasant-looking person by any means. Her cheeks were pale and bloated, and her eyes had the dull, fishy expression of one to whom strong drink is not a stranger.

"Hullo, Maria, is it you?" she exclaimed, with a grip of the hand. "Why, it's years since I saw you, and you ain't altered a bit. Why, you're quite a swell! Bless if you ain't. And who's this young female, if I may make so bold?"

"It is my niece, Irene."

"I didn't know as you had got a niece. Howsomever, she's welcome. How d'ye do, my dear? Come in, come in."

Irene yielded her hand with some compunction, and a slight shiver of disgust, but followed Mrs. Henry into the front parlour—a room which smelt as if its windows had not been opened for the last twelve months or so,

but which was evidently regarded by its mistress with much pride.

A carpet of gaudy blue and red covered the floor, in the fireplace was a wonderful arrangement of curled white and green paper, with a spray of paper flowers trailing across. The looking glass, also, was wreathed round with cut green paper, and the mantelpiece adorned with shells, and sandal wood boxes, apparently brought from "foreign parts."

A parrot, in a large cage, stood in the window, and began shrieking loudly at the visitors.

"Be quiet, do!" exclaimed the hostess, flipping the cage with a duster, a manoeuvre that was cleverly evaded by the parrot, who was apparently used to it, and whom a long practice at dodging had made well-nigh perfect in the accomplishment.

"I never see such a bird in all my life, he's screaming for everlastings. Sit down Maria, sit down, miss. What will you have?"

This last inquiry was addressed to Mrs. Henry, who answered the query by saying,—

"A cup of tea, please."

"A cup of tea!" repeated the mistress of the house, with some scorn. "Well, that ain't much to have after a journey, but you must do as you like. I'm not a going to press you against your will. And the young person won't she have something short either?"

"She will have a cup of tea, too, please," replied Mrs. Henry, hastily, "but we should like to go upstairs and take our things off first, if you have no objection. I suppose you had my letter, and have prepared the room for us?"

"Certainly, and if you go upstairs, and take the first to the right, you'll find it. While you're away I'll make the tea."

"Are we going to stay here all night, then?" asked Irene, when they had mounted the dark, narrow staircase, and taken the "first to the right," which brought them into a stuffy little bedroom.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Henry, sharply. "Have you any objection to our doing so?"

"No; only it does not seem a very nice place," said the girl, with her usual gentleness. "What is the name of the person downstairs?"

"Marlow."

"And she is a friend of yours?"

Mrs. Henry winced under the question, as if she fancied veiled satire had prompted it.

"She is an acquaintance, but I have not seen her for a long time—many years, in fact."

"Did she know my mother?"

"No."

"I am glad of that," the young girl said, and they then descended to the parlour—their nostrils greeted by the strong and penetrating odour of fried herrings.

"I'm just cooking a bloater or two by way of a relish for tea," observed Mrs. Marlow, appearing with a very red face, and a tablecloth flung over her arm. "Trapesing about London is tiring work, and you are fine and hungry, I'm sure. Bless me, if there ain't Jim!"

This last remark was occasioned by the opening of the front door, and the appearance of a tall, rather good-looking young man of about thirty, with a sunburnt face, and a heavy beard and moustache, who shook hands with Mrs. Henry, and stopped short, as if very much astonished, at the appearance of Irene.

And indeed, the young girl looked strangely incongruous and out of place in that gaudy little sitting-room between the two women who were her companions; and if the new comer had been poetic (which he was not) he might have compared her to some fair, slender lily, rising up out of the mud and slime of a slow flowing river.

"This is my niece—the young woman I wrote to you about," said Mrs. Henry, as an introduction, and Marlow made an awkward sort of a movement, which, by a stretch of imagination, might have been interpreted as a bow.

"Shake hands with her, why don't you?" observed his mother, jocosely. "She's no fine lady that you need be so distant, and I don't suppose she would even object to a kiss, if so be you cared to give her one."

But the young man was wiser than his mother, for there was a flash in the blue loveliness of Irene's eyes which warned him not to take a liberty with her, and he was sensible enough to heed the warnings.

"Mother's always ready with her joke," he remarked to Mrs. Henry, in a half apologetic tone; then, turning to Irene, "you needn't be afraid, miss; she means nothing by it."

"And if she did mean anything by it, what of that, I should like to know?" demanded the hostess in a shrill voice, and with an angry scowl. "You're good enough to kiss the likes of her, surely! For all her golden hair, and her haughty ways, I'm as good as Maria Sumner any day, and by the same token you're as good as her niece!"

Poor Irene looked, as she felt, considerably alarmed at this outburst, for in spite of the strange vicissitudes she had lately gone through, it had not yet fallen to her lot to be thrown amongst vulgar people, and she did not know how much—or rather how little—meaning was to be attached to their words.

However, the good lady's tempestuous remarks were allowed to pass in silence, and she speedily regained her equilibrium; and went into the kitchen, from which she presently appeared, bearing a dish of smoking bloaters in one hand, and the teapot in the other.

"Come now, draw up!" she said, seating herself at the head of the table; and accordingly they "drew up," and she paid Irene the compliment of asking how preferences lay in the direction of bloaters. "A hard roed 'un, my dear, or a soft roed 'un?"

Poor Irene shook her head, without the faintest idea of what the question signified, and announced her preference for the plain bread-and-butter, without any "relish" at all—an opinion which Mrs. Marlow received with a sniff of contempt.

To say the truth, the girl was bewildered, and had no inclination for eating. The company and surroundings in which she found herself were so strange that she almost doubted her own identity, and added to this was the disagreeable consciousness that the man who had been called "Jim" was staring at her with undisguised and insolent admiration.

She was in many respects a creature of impulse, as our readers will have seen, and the moment she set eyes on Marlow a curious repugnance towards him had taken possession of her.

And yet he was not by any means repulsive; indeed, some people might have called him handsome—and this opinion was one in which he himself shared, for every time he happened to rise he would cast a glance at his reflection in the paper-wreathed mirror over the mantelpiece, and smirk with all the satisfaction of a vain school-girl when she is trying on some new and becoming bonnet.

Instinct is a strange thing, and instinct warned Irene Duval against James Marlow.

CHAPTER XIX.

IRENE could hardly have told afterwards how that first evening in London passed; but it left a vague sense of unhappiness, scarcely accounted for by the fact of feeling herself in thoroughly uncongenial company.

Luckily for her, she was able to retire early, and Mrs. Henry accompanied her upstairs to the bedroom they were to share together.

"Before you undress I want to have a few words with you," she said, locking the door, so as to secure herself from interruption; and seating herself on the single chair the room contained, while Irene stood leaning against the bottom of the iron bedstead. "It seems to me, from the way in which you hold your-

self aloof from the people downstairs, that you have an idea you are considerably above them in station, but it is an idea that I would advise you to dismiss as soon as possible, for it is a false one. Your birth is no better than Jim Marlow's—not so good, in fact; and it is possible that you may be dependent on him for a good deal of help, so I should change my tone towards him if I were you."

"I was not impolite to your friend, I hope?" returned Irene, with a serene indifference that had the effect of irritating her companion.

"Unpolite! No," she sneered; "you only treated him as if he were too far beneath you to be noticed—that is all; and I tell you plainly it will be better for you to drop that sort of thing as soon as maybe!"

"Shall we be in this house long, then?" questioned the girl, anxiously.

"No; a few days, perhaps. At least, you will; I shall have to return home, as my time is not my own."

"But you will not leave me here alone?" cried Irene, in a sudden wild terror. "Oh! surely you will not be so unkind—so cruel?"

She clasped her slim white hands together, and held them out entreatingly; but Mrs. Henry's cold eyes never softened at the appeal.

"Why should not I leave you here alone?" she demanded, harshly. "You will be quite safe, for the Marlows are honest, even if their manners are rough, and no one will attempt to harm you. Besides, it is necessary you should stay, and this brings me to the main point of what I want to say to you. Of course, it is needless to remark that you are penniless; and as I am only a servant myself you will readily understand that I have not much to give you. In point of fact, you will have to earn your own living."

"I wish to. I am more than willing to do so if you will only tell me how I shall begin!" interrupted the young girl, eagerly.

"In England the market is already over-stocked by governesses and shopgirls," continued Mrs. Henry, taking no heed of the interruption; "and as you would not care for domestic service the only alternative left for you is to go abroad. Now it so happens that I have some relatives, farmers, in Australia, and I have mentioned you to them. They have several children, and are now in want of someone to teach them, so I have made arrangements for you to go out there, and become their governess."

Irene was so completely taken aback by the suddenness of this announcement that she was literally at a loss for words in which to reply to it, and after waiting a minute or two, Mrs. Henry went on,—

"James Marlow is captain and part owner of a sailing vessel trading between here and Melbourne, and he has promised to give you a passage out on payment of a very small sum, and as a favour to me. I am naturally grateful to him for the kindness, and I am assured that I can with confidence trust him to take care of you, and see you safely into the hands of my relatives, one of whom will come to Melbourne to meet you, and accompany you to your future home. I think you will be pleased with the place; the climate is very good, and some of the scenery fine. At all events, it will be a complete change, and I know how fond girls of your age are of that."

While she was speaking a dozen wild ideas flashed through her listener's brain, and when she had finished the girl says, bitterly,—

"Considering that I am your niece, it seems to me you are very anxious to get rid of me."

"I have no alternative," was the cold reply.

"Even if I wished to keep you in England it would be my duty not to neglect so favourable an opening for you as this promises to be. Remember, I am acting entirely for your best interests."

"I do not believe it!" exclaimed Irene, passionately. "If you cared one scrap for me you would not send me alone into a strange land, amongst strange people, just because a situation as governess happens to be open to

me. There are plenty of such situations in England to which I might go if you cared to make an effort; but the fact is, you *hate* my presence here, and your one idea is to get rid of me!"

Her words, impulsive and excited as they were, hit the mark, and Mrs. Henry's pale face grew still paler.

"You need not contradict me," continued Irene, who, mild and gentle as she usually seemed, had yet plenty of spirit; "for I do not base my opinion only on what you have just said, but on your whole course of conduct both during my school-days at the convent, and since my arrival in England. It was *you* who wished me to take the veil in order to get rid of me; and now that I utterly decline to become a nun, you have concocted this plan of sending me to Australia, so as to wash your hands of my future. You need not take so much trouble," she added, drawing up her slender, column-like throat with a stately grace all her own, "for I give you my word I will not be a burden to you; and if you will only let me apply to you for a recommendation—strangers would probably not employ me without it—I will never trouble you further. Neither"—her voice grew very scornful—"will I let people know that you are connected with me, so that your anxiety to hide our relationship may be at an end."

Whatever impression her words may have made on Mrs. Henry's mind one thing was quite certain—namely, that the woman was thoroughly astonished at, and utterly unprepared for, such an exhibition of spirit on the part of the girl whose flexible nature she had thought it would be an easy task to bend to her own will. She looked at her with something like respect.

"At the same time," added Irene, boldly; "I do not say that I shall not make some endeavour to find out all there is to be known about my parents, and thus solve the mystery that you have done so much to keep up."

A little cry of rage and mortification escaped the baffled woman.

"You had better not!" she hissed, losing her usual caution in the anger at feeling herself defied. "For your own sake, I warn you against it."

Irene laughed contemptuously.

"Your warning will be of no avail. Whatever the consequences may be I am willing to risk them. Aye, and I shall succeed in my inquiries, you may be sure, for I am certain of finding friends to help me!"

Mrs. Henry rose in evident agitation. If there had been room she would have paced up and down, but as there was not she went to the window and leaned out, so as to gain time to think before committing herself to a reply.

The outlook was not pleasant. A high, dingy wall, above the top of which masts and spars were dimly visible in the gloom; the street was dark—for lamps were few and far between—and quiet, for there were few houses, and those some distance apart.

The young girl waited patiently for her to speak, and it must be confessed that she was rather triumphant at the effect her behaviour had produced—and confirmed in her resolution of persevering in the course of conduct she had, so far, successfully adopted.

Perhaps, in her inmost heart, she was astonished at her own courage, for it must be remembered that she had been brought up under the strictest discipline of obedience, and it is difficult to shake off, all in a minute, the custom of years.

(To be continued.)

ALFRED TENNYSON has been England's poet laureate since 1850, a longer period than the honour was held by any of his predecessors. Colley Cibber enjoyed the distinction from 1730 to 1757, and Robert Southey from 1813 to 1843; all the others, from Edmund Spenser down, for much shorter terms.

OH! GIVE HIM BACK TO ME!

—O:—

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THE MARQUIS OF BELFEATHER."

LADY STAPLETON'S house in Brook-street was furnished with a due regard to comfort and elegance. She was one of those people who are content to follow the fashion so far as it suits them, but no further.

The halls were adorned with handsome curtains drawn across the archways because, not only were they pleasant to the eye, but they also kept out a considerable amount of draught.

Carpets were placed over the polished floors of the drawing-rooms in the winter because they added to the warmth, and nothing would induce her to have straight-backed sofas and chairs in order to look more correctly old-fashioned, when she considered them so desperately uncomfortable.

It was now the month of January, with cold and frost reigning in the streets, and hunger and wretchedness in the slums; but here in this beautifully-decorated room the firelight was playing cheerfully on tiger-skin mats, old Chelsea china, a Parian marble statuette gleaming whitely against a Turkish curtain, the corner of a picture-frame of antique shape, and the diamond brooch which shone like a star in the front of Lady Stapleton's headdress.

Dressed in black velvet, her fair hair slightly tinged with grey, drawn up over a cushion, Lady Stapleton would still outshine many younger women by means of her own personal attractions.

As she sat there before the fire, holding up a screen of dark red feathers between her face and the blaze, she could not help confessing to herself that she was very nervous.

She had acted on Bertie Mayne's advice, and brought Violet up to town to try what a little gaiety would do for her; and to-night, for the first time for seven years, she was to appear in a London ball-room.

Lord and Lady Mayne were still in Vienna, but now after that first false step Lady Stapleton consulted them about every move. They quite approved of the present step, and thought it was time for their daughter to give up her life of seclusion.

Bertie offered to escort them to their first party, and presently appeared with a bunch of gardenias and heliotrope, which he presented to his aunt for the front of her dress, and a lovely bouquet of Neapolitan violets and Gloire de Dijons for his sister.

He was dressed faultlessly, and looked a thorough gentleman, a thick gold chain to his watch, and a signet ring, being his only attempts at jewellery.

"How is she—pretty fit?" he asked, as he leant his back against the mantelpiece.

"Yes; I hope so. She has been quite bright to-day, and seemed to enjoy shopping in Regent-street," said his aunt, cheerfully.

"Not inclined to kick over the traces exactly?"

"My dear boy, what are you thinking of?" in scandalised reproof.

"Well, you know, she may be trained to run in double harness, and not like it if they try her alone. But here she is! Well, Vi—you don't look altogether bad?" in a tone of involuntary admiration.

Not bad! when she was enough to delight the eyes of any man who had eyes to see, and taste to appreciate!

She was dressed in black lace of the finest texture, and diamonds were her only ornaments. The black set off the dazzling whiteness of her skin, and the extreme delicacy of her beauty, and nothing could have been more becoming.

If Jack—poor Jack—could only have seen her, he would almost have knelt at her feet!

"Oh, Bertie, how kind of you!" she ex-

claimed, as he put the roses into her hands, and she held up her face for a kiss.

"Nothing to speak of. Wouldn't allow any other man to give them to you. Now let us be off."

He hurried them into the carriage, for it was already eleven o'clock, and he did not want his sister's *entrée* to be spoilt by arriving late, when everyone was too much occupied to look out for new-comers.

Like his aunt, he felt rather nervous, for he quite appreciated the awkwardness of his sister's position as a wife without any visible husband; but if man or woman dared to show her the cold shoulder, he meant to make either rather sorry for his or her conduct.

All went well. The Duchess of Kensington gave the trio an especially warm welcome, and even went so far as to kiss Violet on both cheeks, and say something flattering in an audible whisper.

Her son, the Marquis of Belfeather, insisted upon an instantaneous introduction, and led her off in triumph, as if she had been the belle of last season.

"You don't dance? Quite right, we'll leave it to the boys and girls," he said, with youthful audacity, as he led her to a comfortable seat he knew of in a corner. There he amused her with his quaint conversation, whilst his eyes dwelt with some remnant of enthusiasm on her beauty. He was only four-and-twenty, but he had been "going the pace" ever since he left Eton, and of course knew every pleasure so well that he was quite *blasé*.

But he could still talk to a pretty woman with great satisfaction, although he was tired to death of flirtations with the girls; or, at least, he said so.

Numbers of friends claimed acquaintance with Violet, and she received them all with the same sweet smile, playing her part, as Bertie allowed, to perfection. She did not dance, but as she was known to be in delicate health no one minded her refusal, or felt offended at it; and her aunt agreed that it was perhaps in better taste, considering her unprotected state, to sit still and while away the time in pleasant talk.

It was perfectly clear from the very beginning that nobody, not even the strictest dowager or the veriest old maid, meant to fight shy of her. Her air of quiet dignity gave the lie to any report of fastness, and Lady Stapleton's escort would have been sufficient to cover a multitude of sins.

Lord Belfeather came back to her later in the evening, and insisted upon taking her into supper. And when supper was over he took her a tour through the rooms, which were worth seeing, and of historic interest.

"How is it that I have never seen you before?" he said, as he sat down by her side in the same corner which he had selected beforehand; "surely you must have been out of England—lost in a fire-fountain, or stranded on a mountain."

"Lost in Kent," she said, quietly; "not a hundred miles off."

"And I never knew it! Oh, to think the time that I have wasted!" he exclaimed, tragically. "Did you bury yourself under the ground, or in a haystack? I've run down to Canterbury often for the cricket week. I've been to Dover scores of times; I've spent a day and a half at Rochester, and lived for a fortnight with some fellows of the Artillery at Woolwich, and if you had been anywhere about I must have heard of it."

"But I wasn't. Nobody heard of me, for I was hidden in the little village of Leighton."

"I suppose there's a trout-stream and plenty of foxes, and your husband's mad about sport?"

He was sorry directly the words were out of his mouth, for he saw a look of pain cross her face, and there was pause before she answered, in a low voice,—

"Mad about sport? Yes, I suppose so; one year in the Soudan, another in the Rockies, a third on the Andes."

"And you are left behind?" his eyes open-

ing. "Evidently this man Sartoris did not know when he was in luck," he thought to himself.

"Yes, such a sort of life would not suit me at all. I should get sick to death of running about."

"Quite agree with you. When you stand still it gives time for your friends to come up. And now that you are 'standing still' in Brook-street you will let me take my chance?" looking into her eyes with an expression of fervent admiration in his own.

"My aunt will be delighted to see you."

"And you?"—softly—"you won't be sorry?"

"No. If I thought I should be sorry I would say 'Not at home!'"

"But you won't say it—promise me you won't?"

She was looking up with a laughing answer on her lips, amused at his earnestness, when suddenly she caught sight of Ralph Armitage making his way towards her through the crowd. A cloud came before her eyes, as the sight of his face reminded her of all she most wished to forget.

"Take me away," she said, in a frightened whisper; "do you see that man? He is coming—and I can't speak to him."

The Marquis looked round and saw who it was she wished to avoid. As she stood up, he said,—

"Allow me!" and the next moment his arm was round her slender waist, and they were waltzing in the midst of the throng of dancers, whilst Ralph Armitage looked after them with an angry frown.

Lord Belfeather found he had a perfect partner, and was delighted with his own presence of mind; but when they pulled up after several delightful turns, he apologized most humbly.

"I knew you didn't want to dance, and it was awfully cool of me; but it was the only way."

"I know it was," she said, gratefully.

"And now, don't you think it would be safer to take another turn?" he asked, cunningly.

And so it came to pass that she danced a whole waltz with Lord Belfeather—a dance twice as long as any other, for the musicians received a hint to go on a little longer whenever they seemed inclined to stop. And Violet enjoyed it, as she had enjoyed that first dance at the Priory, before the footsteps on the gravel had roused such torturing doubts. An exquisite sense of returning youth came over her, as her small feet kept perfect time with the music; and she and the young Marquis seemed to be floating on the wings of melody, into some sphere of happiness where the wretchedness of the past was quite forgotten.

And when the dance was over he took her to all the out-of-the-way corners he could think of, on pretence of eluding the pursuit of Ralph Armitage; and was delighted at the consciousness of having established this brand-new friendship on quite a confidential footing.

"We won't ask the fellow if you've the smallest objection to meeting him," he promised, as indeed he was ready to promise anything, for there was a look in Violet's eyes which seemed to go straight to his impressionable young heart. A chivalrous desire rose in him to do something for her—some little service for which she might give him a word of gratitude, and one of her wondrous smiles.

Her husband was a brute to leave her in such a forlorn condition, and again and again he wondered that one so beautiful should be so cruelly neglected.

Bertie laughed at the air of devotion with which the Marquis attended his sister to the cloak-room and carriage, and at the judicious undertone in which he asked if he might call and inquire how she was between four and five the next day.

"If you don't mind the trouble," she said, with a smile. "One of the footmen will be able to tell you."

Lord Belfeather bit the end of his small moustache, as he bowed and stepped back, and he went back again up the broad staircase with a puzzled expression on his face. Did she mean it for a snub? Could she

possibly mean that he wasn't to go in? Had he done any thing to offend her? His conscience was quite clear, and his countenance brightened, for it required rather more than an insignificant little doubt to damp the spirits of the popular young Marquis.

A cousin of Lady Jane's was running down the stairs when Lord Belfeather stopped him. "I'm in an awful hurry," Mr. Clinton remarked.

"So I see, but just answer a question. Weren't you shooting in the Andes with a man named Sartoris?"

"Yes, last year. I've got an appointment at one o'clock, and it's five minutes past," going down on to a lower step.

"Then you are too late already. What sort of man is he?"

"Best fellow out."

"Why—why does he desert his wife?" hesitating in spite of his eagerness, and almost speaking in a whisper.

"Screw loose somewhere; not his fault, I'd bet a thousand."

"I'd bet a million it wasn't hers," with the eager confident faith of a young man who knows nothing about the matter.

Ned Clinton laughed, and made his escape, whilst Lord Belfeather, a little graver than usual, pursued his way upstairs.

On the landing he met Ralph Armitage, who asked him at once if he could tell him where Mrs. Sartoris was.

"Gone just this minute!" cheerfully.

"Gone!" the sorrowful face flushing with irrepressible vexation. "And I haven't spoken a word to her!"

"Are you a friend of hers?" carelessly, watching him from under his long lashes, and coming to the swift conclusion that the friendship was hot enough on his side at least.

"Yes; rather," with an emphasis which left a wide field open for conjecture. "I had no idea she was in London. Can you tell me her address?"

"I didn't ask it," not thinking it necessary to add, "because I was told it beforehand."

With an amused smile he went on his way, wondering if anything on earth would have dragged the address out of him, when he felt sure that Mrs. Sartoris did not wish it to be known by this so-called friend.

By-and-by he came across a man who knew everybody's business better than his own, and who told him Violet's story with variations, winding up with the prophecy that one day Sartoris would be picked up dead at the bottom of a gully, and his widow would become Mrs. Armitage.

"Why, she hates him!" exclaimed Lord Belfeather, in angry protest.

"Possibly, but he will be too much for her. He saved her life, you see, and he's the sort of fellow to exact the last farthing."

"Let him try. I think some of us will be clever enough to prevent him," in hot disdain.

"Not you, Belfeather! Don't have anything to do with her. Not safe—hate a woman with a story."

"Depends upon the story, and the woman too," under his breath. "Look here, I don't mean any nonsense," he said aloud, "but I know a good woman when I see one, and I've an idea that we might be friends. I think we all ought to stand by her, as it's one of us who has behaved so badly to her."

"Does Mrs. Sartoris want an army?"

"No, but an honest friend or two would do her no harm."

The other man turned away with a cynical smile. It was a novelty to see Belfeather so enthusiastic about anything; and having lived too long in the world to believe in the purity of human motives, he looked into the future, and foresaw a scandal.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A STRANGE LIKENESS.

LADY JANE ARMITAGE never looked so well as in a habit, and the consciousness of looking

her best generally put into a good temper. But to-day there were signs that her persona barometer was doing the reverse of rising, as she stood on the hearthrug biting the end of her hunting-crop with her small white teeth.

Her brother no longer lived in the family mansion in Eaton-square, but had lodgings of his own in Albemarle-street. However, to-day he had come in early to ask his father a question, and had remained to write a letter in the Countess of Oldthorpe's boudoir.

"Do you know, Ralph, I am growing uneasy," said Lady Jane suddenly, although she had been pondering over the remark for some time. "It is so very odd that nothing has been heard of Jack Sartoris for all these ages."

A splutter of ink came down on the paper, as his pen fell from his hand. "How can you expect me to write sense if you will interrupt so?" he said irritably, and bent his face lower over the writing, as if he had suddenly become shortsighted.

Lady Jane's lip curled contemptuously; but she said quietly, "I will wait till you have finished."

He prolonged his letter as long as he could; but knowing that her eyes were upon him he was obliged to direct the envelope as soon as he had signed his name, lest she should accuse him of dawdling, and suspect a secret motive. Heaven help him! He had to be on his guard now with his sister, as well as with the nearest acquaintance, and never say the first thing that came into his head, as he used to do in the days of comparative innocence.

"Well, are you ready?" she said impatiently.

"What is it?" gruffly, wishing with all his heart that he had never come inside his mother's boudoir, and so offered himself as a prey to his sister's eager curiosity.

"Don't you think it very strange that we haven't had a word from Jack Sartoris?"

Ralph did not look round, but began industriously pulling the feather of the quill-pen to pieces, as if his future security depended on the manner in which he despatched the stem.

"Not at all, why should we hear? We have nothing to do with him."

"Speak for yourself," with a slight toss of her head; "ever since he went away, he has looked on me as his only friend in England."

"That is putting it rather strong, considering that he had a wife," with an attempt at a sarcastic smile.

The colour rushed into her face in an overpowering flood. She turned away her head, as she said quickly, "You know that his wife is nothing to him. What does it matter to him whether she is alive or dead, when he is at the Antipodes, and she is amusing herself in Brook-street. By-the-by, what did she say last night?"

"Say—nothing!"

"You don't mean to say she never spoke to you?" opening her eyes, as if by accident.

"I was late; I couldn't get near her, and young Belfeather monopolised her."

"You are not such friends as you used to be?" watching him closely.

No answer; but she saw a scowl come upon his face—a scowl of the fiercest; darkest kind—which betokened a storm raging within.

"It seems as if you and I were both down on our luck," she said, tentatively. "Jack forgets me, and his wife snubs you."

"Nothing of the sort," savagely; "a woman can't talk to everyone."

"No; but she might have the politeness to give a word to the man who saved her life."

"Let her alone," sullenly.

"No, Ralph; just for your sake I'll go and see her this afternoon. You wouldn't have gone into mourning, I know, if poor Jack had died in that railway accident."

"No, I shouldn't have gone into mourning," in an odd voice, as his heart throbbed at the thought of what endless misery he himself would have been spared if that first report had been true.

"Will you be a good boy, and do me a

favour?" coaxingly, as she leant over the back of his chair.

His head bent lower as he said,—

"What is it? I'm not going to take a leap in the dark."

"Only I want you to go to Gordon and Gregson—his bankers, you know—and ask if they've heard anything from him."

"Not I, Jane, I'm ashamed of you!" sternly, as he rose from his chair, and looked down at her with resentful eyes. "I couldn't do it. Nothing would tempt me. Do you want the whole of London to laugh at your infatuation?"

"You hate him, so you think it disgraceful for anyone, even his oldest friends, to have the smallest interest in him," her voice trembling with excitement, her slim figure quivering with indignation.

His face changed, his cheeks grew livid.

"Who says I hate him?"

"I do. You cannot bear his name to be mentioned. I've seen you actually shiver with disgust when we've been talking of him."

"Good heavens! what nonsense you are talking, Jane! I believe you can make yourself imagine anything. Do you think I'll go to Gordon and Gregson this very day," with an air of resolution, as he went towards the door.

Lady Jane was so surprised that she could scarcely believe her ears; but she told him he was a good boy, and pulled him on the back. Then as her eye fell on the writing-table she said, with a little laugh,—

"You are forgetting your letter. Shall I send it to the post with mine?"

"I shall forget my head next," he said, in a tone of such dejection that she looked up with surprise.

It came upon her with the effect of a shock that he was looking years older than he really was, and that his face had grown terribly thin, as if worn with grief or disease.

She laid her hand upon his arm, and said, kindly,—

"What is it, Ralph? Have you anything on your mind?"

She asked the question out of a simple impulse of compassion, because he was going to do her a kindness, and her heart felt softened towards him. She was, therefore, startled and astonished beyond measure when he threw off her hand as if it were stinging him, and with an oath hurried out of the room.

He shut the door behind him, and when he was on the outside he told himself that he had been a fool, and constrained himself to go back, and say, gently,—

"Don't think me a brute, Jane; but fact is I've been driven nearly mad with neuralgia lately, and the slightest word upsets me."

"Why didn't you tell me? You must have that prescription of Dr. Simpson's made up."

"Wouldn't do me the least good in the world!" and he hurried out of the room again, remembering to give a careless nod and a smile as he went out at the door.

Lady Jane went for her usual ride in the park, under the escort of Colonel Forrester and his daughter; but she did not enjoy it, though the morning was as bright as the winter sunshine could make it, and she met a number of friends.

Her brother's worn face was always before her eyes, do what she would to forget it. There must be something in the background to produce such a dreadful effect in the space of a few months—something infinitely worse than neuralgia—something which a doctor's prescription could never cure!

If it were a question of money he would have come to her at once, as he had come so often before, when plagued by importunate creditors. A foreboding of evil crept over her, which took the ring out of her laughter, and damped the brightness of her conversation. Ralph was altered, Jack Sartoris gone, and life seemed a very dull sort of affair to take so much trouble about.

"Did you ever see that Mr. St. John whom Lady Stapleton made such a fuss over?" Miss

Forrester asked, presently, as they slackened their pace.

"No, by the merest chance I always missed him," said Lady Jane, wondering what had put the question into her friend's head.

"I did once, as he was coming out of Holly Bank. His horse was inclined to be up to mischief, and I must say he sat him as if he were glued to the saddle."

"He was good-looking, wasn't he?"

"You would think so," with a mischievous glance, quite thrown away upon Lady Jane, as her horse swerved to the left at the moment. "He was the exact image of that Mr. Sartoris whom we met at your house in the summer. Don't you remember, he was running down stairs as we came up?"

Lady Jane did remember. Jack had fled at the approaching visitors had the smallest, and in his hurry to avoid them had rushed into Mrs. Forrester's arms. How she laughed at him afterwards!

"No one, you must have imagined it. No body ever told me so before."

"You know that Mr. Sartoris's mustache were the finest in the world? Well, Mr. St. John's were just the same."

"You must have stared him out of countenance!"

"I always use my eyes when there is something good to look at. Good-morning," to a friend who rode up to her side. "We thought you had started for Bournemouth."

The conversation changed, but Lady Jane kept the substance of it in her mind. If the likeness was so very striking, it was odd that Lady Stapleton had never mentioned it!

CHAPTER XXX.

"YOU PROMISED ON YOUR HONOUR!"

"Trust to me, Mrs. Sartoris, and on my word of honour you shan't fall," said Lord Belfeather, taking summary possession of two little hands, and looking down into her face with the happiest air of appropriation.

They were standing together on the edge of a frozen lake in the grounds of the Duke of Kensington's favourite country-house, not very far from London. The large family estate was in the North, and therefore at too great a distance for only a stay of a day and a night.

The Duchess had carried off Violet almost at a moment's notice, because she had taken a fancy to her pretty face, and was sorry for her desolate position. She meant to show the world that it was "the correct thing" to know Mrs. Sartoris; so she took her by the hand metaphorically, as her son was doing literally, and with such willing devotion amongst the throng of skaters at a few yards from the bank.

It was an animated scene. Besides the home party staying at "The Willows" there was a large contingent of visitors from the neighbourhood, and some of the ladies' bright dresses gave a picturesque tone to the crowd. There was a tent on the bank, where there was an open space amongst the flowerless rhododendrons, and in front of the tent a large fire of coke in a cresset, round which there was generally a group composed of the Duchess and her particular friends.

Hills wooded to the water's edge enclosed the lake at the eastern end; the grey stone house with castellated towers and deep oriel windows stood on the northern side facing a graceful group of willows, which gave the place its name on the southern. It looked the picture of an English home, with grace, comfort and beauty combined, to make a perfect whole, and it was to be Lord Belfeather's, as soon as he chose to take unto himself a wife. Many bright eyes followed the young Marquis as he flitted past old friends and new, utterly absorbed by the fascination of a pale sweet face, with a strangely wistful smile—a face that seemed to raise him out of the prosaic life of everyday into a higher sphere; where chivalry was no longer a dream, and men were ruled by something nobler than

their own ignoble desires. He could not tear himself away, though he began to feel that reproachful glances were thrown at him as he passed, and unkind remarks were being made behind his back.

"If you would only tell me of anything that I could do for you," he said softly, as he unwillingly let go of her hands, whilst they were standing still to recover breath in a sheltered nook, where the withered ferns on the bank were trod out in the most delicate frost-work. "It's no humming, Mrs. Sartoris. To have a real honest 'thank you' from you would make me the happiest fellow alive."

"You are very kind!" with a smile, followed by a sigh.

"You haven't answered me. Can't I read it in your face? There is something you are wishing for, and I would give all I have in the world to know what it was."

"It wouldn't interest you. It concerns myself. No one else."

"No one else? That's impossible," with a short laugh, as if he guessed at the depth of his own feeling, and half ashamed of it as well. "Do you know that I can't get to sleep at night for thinking of it, and I've always slept like a top? Do you know that it takes such a hold of me, that often when I'm with fellows, I make quite an ass of myself, and answer all wrong?"

"And you couldn't guess?" bitterly.

"I made a hundred guesses. Shall I tell you one?" lowering his voice.

She bent her head, till half her face was hidden in her bosom of sable-falls.

"That you are married to a man not worthy of you!"

"Wrong, a thousand times wrong!" indignantly.

The colour rushed into Belfeather's face. He was almost afraid to try again, and yet he was drawn on by a feverish eagerness which he strove in vain to resist. Whilst he was hesitating, she raised her head, and a lovely flush crept over the whiteness of her cheeks.

"In the present depraved state of society, of course you could not imagine that a wife might want her husband," she said, almost angrily.

"Then why are you alone?" he said, thoughtlessly, only thinking that if he were the lucky man she wanted he would never have left her side.

Her voice was very low as she answered, sadly,—

"Because in this life the thing you most wish for is always furthest off."

"Ah! if I were Sartoris!"—he stopped and bit his mustaches.

"You might have made the same mistake."

"I don't know what the mistake was," looking down, almost defiantly, into her eyes; "but I could stake my head I would have stuck to you—yes, stuck to you through everything—and never left you like this"—infinite compassion in his voice—"to fight the world alone."

Then there was silence between them. Whilst he looked across the shimmering ice to where there was a gathering glow in the west his face flushed with boyish enthusiasm, his heart beating with a strange excitement.

"Shall I tell him that you want him? He can't know it?" he asked, after a long pause.

"No. But if you want to do me a service—" She hesitated.

"I do. I swear I do."

"If ever you meet him—supposing I am dead and out of the way—tell him that it was a mistake from the beginning; it was pride, and nothing else, that separated us. I—I never cared"—a crimson blush overspread her face. Was it that a thought of Mr. St. John darted across her mind, or a sudden doubt lest she had gone too far? She stopped abruptly.

A winning smile spread over the Marquis's face as he took her hands in his, preparatory to a fresh start.

"I will tell him that—not when it is too



["OH! WHY DIDN'T YOU COME BEFORE?" VIOLET SAID, IN A TONE OF DEEP REGRET.]

time for either of you—but whilst there is time for you both to be as happy as possible. Only let me find him, and I'll tell him at once."

"You are my best friend," she said, looking up at him with a glow of gratitude in her large eyes, her heart swelling with new hope, though she told herself it was folly.

"That is better than a Victoria Cross," he said joyfully, as he bent his head and kissed her hands, deferentially, his young heart going out to her on a wave of compassion, as he thought of her longing for a man who never came, and wondered if Sartoris were mad!

"You are too tired," he said, as they started, and he felt she wavered uncertainly. "Tell you what. I'll fetch one of those small sleighs, and take you back without any exertion on your part. Wait for a minute on this stump."

He led her back most carefully to the bank, deposited her on the ivied roots of what had once been a gigantic oak, then hurried away as fast as he could, in order not to keep her waiting.

The drooping branches of a willow cut her off from sight of the constantly moving crowd, and from all the glory of the western sky. A great gloom came over her in the silence and solitude, and she began to wish that she had persevered, and not allowed herself to be left there all alone. As the shadows deepened a vague feeling of fear crept over her, which changed into active disgust, as a man came swiftly round the willow, and she saw it was Ralph Armitage.

He took off his hat, and scrambled to the bank, with a look of intense eagerness in his eyes.

"At last!" he said, his pale cheeks flushing, his breast heaving. Now as he looked at the beauty which had led him so wildly astray a fierce exultation came over him, and for the first time since he had done the awful deed, he was glad, positively glad, that Jack

Sartoris lay cold and still under the waves of the Crannock, because now he could love his widow without scruple, and win her for himself without dishonour.

He sat down at her feet, in spite of the snow on the bank, and looked up into her face with his eyes all on fire.

"You are always out when I call! You avoided me at the Duchess's dance, but at last I have my chance. Mrs. Sartoris, have you forgotten?"

"I don't know to what you allude!" looking away from him across the cold, grey ice. "Did you see Lord Belfeather anywhere? He promised to fetch me in a sleigh."

"I did see Lord Belfeather, and I blessed the old woman who hooked herself on to him, and so prevented him from coming back. Have you forgotten your promise? I have thought of nothing else, night and day."

"What promise?"

"You know very well. You made it when the storm was at its worst, and you thought death might be near us. A promise like that is never forgotten."

"But I have been ill," a troubled look coming over her face; "you can't expect me to remember."

"I know you haven't forgotten," his voice throbbing with passion. "You couldn't forget it if you tried; but if your memory is bad I can remind you," leaning forward. "It was about St. John, you know," he could not help a catch in his breath as the name of the murdered man passed his lips. "You promised that if I saw him, and if he refused to come back, you would be my wife."

She shrank back from him, her eyes wide open, an expression of horror on her parted lips.

"I never did—impossible!" Oh, where was Lord Belfeather? She wished to Heaven he would come. The silence seemed to deepen in the momentary pause, and not a sound came from either far or near.

"You did—I swear it!" a gleam of triumph

in his eyes. "If you were free—you promised on your honour!"

"You must be mad. Do you forget that I have a husband? I was half mad myself that night, but not crazed enough for that."

"The report had come that he was dead."

"And you traded on it at once?"

"I had been panting for your freedom, and when it came neither heaven nor hell could have kept me silent."

"Thank Heaven, it has not come," starting to her feet, "and I have still a husband living to protect me from your pursuit."

"But if he dies, no matter where or how, remember, you belong to me," his voice harsh as a raven's.

"Never—never!" in great agitation.

At that moment Lord Belfeather whisked round the corner, and placed a dainty little sleigh before her.

In her eagerness to get into it she nearly fell; but he caught her in his arms, and saved her.

"Oh! why didn't you come before?" she said, in a tone of such regret that he cast a sharp glance at Armitage, whom he did not recognize in the shadow.

"Has anyone annoyed you?" he asked, quickly. "I couldn't get here before—I flew as soon as I was free."

"Take me away, that's all," she said, hurriedly, and he obeyed; but when they were far from the corner, and within a short distance of the group round the fire, he bent over her, and said, in a low but eager voice,—

"Who was that fellow? Tell me, and I'll go and have it out with him!"

"No, let him be; only if he dines here to-night I will keep to my room," her voice still trembling.

"Then he won't put his foot inside the house; that I can promise you. It was Armitage, wasn't it? He must have come with the De la Tours, but I take my oath he shan't come again!"

(To be continued.)



[VETAH STAGGERS INTO THE ROOM TO FALL AT HER HUSBAND'S FEET.]

SIR LYNN'S CHOICE.

CHAPTER I.

SPRING, budding young spring, with its wealth of snowy blossoms, fresh, fragrant, and virginal in its maidenly purity, has usurped the chill of winter's grim presence.

The green woods kiss the mild, wooing breeze, while the waves are leaping and dancing joyously, as the sun darts its magical rays of glowing warmth, turning it into shimmering gold and silver sheen, as they ripple and lap the shore.

All nature is clad; even the trees send forth a murmur of praise, and nod their blossom-crowned heads in harmony with the feathered choir which have built their summer abodes in sheltering bowers, and are piping forth a flood of delicious melody.

A pink may-tree is supporting something not quite so light as a bird, but a dainty little intruder without wings, whose tiny feet scarcely bend the branch she is perched upon; her hands are clutching at the best and rosiest sprays, and she coos with pleasure as she presses the sweet coral bunches to her rosy lips, and sips their nectar.

Fluffy tendrils of rich chestnut hair become entangled with the rade embraces of Mr. Hawthorn, all unheeded, though, by the maiden who is revelling in her freedom and wild untidiness.

"Catch, you looby!" she shouts down to a curly-pated boy, who is busily engaged sucking a thrush's egg he had contrived to sneak without his cousin's knowledge. "Why, all the blossom will get spoiled!"

"Bother the flowers; now if it were nuts or apples a fellow might feel a little inte-

rested, but this prickly stuff—why, its rubbish!" retorts Hal Rydon.

"I'll smother you with my prickliest bits if you do not obey me instantly," she says, merrily.

Her sunny, roguish look is too much for Hal, and forth he stretches a big straw cap to receive the spoil.

"Oh! I say!" he suddenly exclaims. "Here's a pretty go! Do hurry down. Sir Lynn Myron is just turning round by the stable; he will see you as sure as eggs are eggs."

She flings her lapful of treasures pell-mell on the luckless head of Master Hal, and commences a frantic retreat to *terra firma*. But a vicious bough catches hold of her skirt and makes her a prisoner to her dismay.

Nearer and nearer approaches the figure of a gentleman, who looks at the picture before him with an amused smile.

"Permit me to assist you," Sir Lynn Myron says, trying to appear serious, but failing egregiously.

"Hal will help me," she cries, pettishly. "He is scarcely strong enough, I fear. Come, put your foot on my shoulder."

"I won't, so there," she retorts, almost fiercely. "Can't you leave me alone when you see me in this terrible plight?"

Tears of mortification are in her voice, and her bonny brown eyes; this settles the matter for the Baronet, who entreats no longer.

"Turn your back," suggests Hal, as if by inspiration. "Vetah is ashamed to come down while you are here."

"How dense I am," returns Sir Lynn, apologetically, as he instantly takes a searching scrutiny of the landscape.

Away she tugs with vehement violence, till the skirt and her nearly part company, and a pair of delicate ankles and trim little feet are disclosed.

She makes a mad effort to extricate herself from her perch, and down she plumps with a

crash into a pair of strong arms that gather the little trembling form to his breast with as much gentleness as if she were a wounded dove.

"I hope you are not really hurt?" he says, anxiously.

"Yes, I am," she answers, ruefully, as sparkling tears gather in her eyes. "My elbow pains me dreadfully."

In a moment the sleeve is raised tenderly, and a cruel scratch reveals itself, from which a crimson jet is flowing.

Quick as thought his handkerchief is bound round the soft white arm, and he retains it much longer than the occasion demands. It is such a pretty rounded, dimpled thing, and the owner is so demure and meek, that he almost wishes that young shaver of a cousin would betake himself off on a marauding expedition among the birds' nests.

"You were very wilful, little lady, to reject my aid," he says, mischievously, "and a speedy punishment followed, though, I admit, no one regrets the accident more than I; but there, some little girls will be naughty in spite of advice," smiling into the sweet face saucily.

"I am not a child, Sir Lynn," she stammers, indignantly. "Why, I am a real woman now, and sit at table with mamma and papa."

This reply evokes a peal of laughter from her surgeon in spite of himself.

"May I venture to ask how old you are to participate in such delightful ceremonies?" he asks, banteringly.

"Seventeen last month," she returns, with an important little nod of her head.

"Oh, seventeen!" he repeats, sagely. "That is a very good age; that is a—well—What the deuce do I mean?" he thinks, at a loss what to say lest he should utter something to vex this capacious maid.

"You are only making fun of me, I verily believe," she says, archly, peeping shyly up

into his handsome face to see if he is in earnest or not.

"Never were my thoughts more serious," he hastens to protest. "Why, my opinion of seventeen is—"

"What, now, are these thoughts?" she puts in. "You seem to find it difficult to explain them. It is no use trying to deceive me. I can see you think me a foolish, silly thing; but there, I will forgive you if you promise not to tell anyone how you caught me to-day up that spindle tree. Mamma would never cease scolding me, I know, and sister Blanche she would scold me for ever and a day."

"Can you become of our friend Hal?"

"He!" she repeats, with a wealth of love and confidence. "Why, he would be a match for the world."

"I wish the only thought as much of me as she evidently does of him," he thinks, rather dimly, as his eyes followed that young gentleman, who was wishing to make the unpopular thing easy, wisely betook himself to a high post, where he was amusing himself by flinging his hat about the fishy beach and dace who were bold enough to peep at the dry position of the earth.

Aloud he says—

"Never! Hal is a fortunate boy to have inspired you with so much confidence. I can only hope to gain some, too, by telling you wild horses wouldn't drag my secret from me since it is your wish I should not divulge it."

"You are so good and nice as Hal then," she says, gleefully, clapping her hands with childish delight.

"God forbid that any, I shall hate him soon," she thinks. "Dreadful hard to be compared to a young one like him just as I thought we were getting on so well."

"Hal and I must be going, or we shall get no end of a wiggling; but I—I would like to say how grateful I am to you for catching me, and binding my arm. It was really very kind of you."

She looks so provokingly sweet and irresistible that he can scarcely refrain from snatching a kiss from those rosy lips.

"If you could be in a like plight every moment of the day without the hurt I believe I should be the happiest mortal in existence; these arms are not accustomed to catch such priceless treasures."

Her eyes seek the ground, for there is a fiery sparkle in the Baronet's she cannot, artless as she is, dare to meet unflinchingly; and he, noting the snowy lids averted from his impassioned gaze, takes comfort and becomes elated at her sweet confusion.

Gathering her tattered gown as well as she can round her she calls her cousin, then holds out her hand, which bears a goodly array of scratches, and says "good-bye."

"Not good-bye," he hastens to protest, "au-revoir sounds better; good-bye always seems to me like the knell of all earthly happiness and hope."

"Then I will humour you as you have me, and never say good-bye to you."

"I would that you could carry it out in earnest," he said, earnestly.

"So I will," she says, gaily, as she catches hold of Hal's hand and trips out of his sight.

"How little she knows what those words convey to me," he thinks, moodily. "It is only six weeks since I first saw her, and I am positively burning with a consuming love that seems unquenchable. What a consummate idiot I must be! Why, she is only a child in years, thought, and nature, while I—(here he flicked his cane viciously at a bed of variegated tulips) am a—," but the sentence was never finished.

"Hal, dear, you might tell me if I showed much of my feet—er—or legs?" this insinuatingly, yet blushing furiously at the awful thought.

"I only know I could see a pink bit of ribbon dangling down that looked like a garter."

"Oh, Hal! it isn't true," she gasps, in dismay; "you are only teasing me."

"What do you ask a fellow for if you say I am telling crams?"

"What I meant to say," this conciliatingly, "is, did Sir Lynn see my—my garter?" she asks, desperately.

"How do I know?" he answers, callously. "I suppose he did if he had eyes."

"You are a nasty, disagreeable, spiteful boy, and I shall not give you that half-sovereign I promised when papa gives me my allowance, so there."

"I was only having a look. Why, Sir Lynn is too much of a gentleman to look at a girl's legs," he replies, coaxingly.

This assertion pacified the little devil, who whispered—

"You shall have the half-sovereign, Hal, dear," and having gained his prey—a warning, scolding, old boy—went mounting—the scoundrel through a side entrance, then through a conservatory, up to her own peculiar apartment to obliterate all traces of her escapade.

CHAPTER III.

"Why, here is Sir Lynn coming through the hedge gate," observes Mrs. Rydon. "It is quite significant. Hum, Blanche, and change your dress; put on that black colour all, it suits you to perfection."

"I detest the black, mamma; these only borrowings are so terribly ugly," returns Blanche Rydon, a lovely, fair girl, tall and supple, with magnificent wavy golden hair and pearly-coloured eyes, shaded with dark lashes.

"You are always contrary, Blanche," her mother sighs. "I wish children would be tractable, and give some little respect to the opinion of their elders."

Blanche did not stay to hear more, but flew upstairs to robe herself according to her own sweet will.

Not a word is said to Vetch about her dress. Mrs. Rydon could not conceive any gentleman could call three times and bask in the light of so lovely a presence as the imperious beauty of the house without being singled.

When Sir Lynn enters the room that little lady gives him a demure, half-saucy, half-timid glance as he takes her hand, then becomes absorbed in some mysterious fancy-work which certainly requires seemingly a vast deal of attention, for the sunny little head is persistently bent over the bright-coloured wools, much to the Baronet's chagrin.

Presently Blanche glides in, a beautiful vision, clad in pale blue, a poise of cream roses at her throat and waist. Sir Lynn looked at her with genuine admiration and well he might, for Blanche Rydon was very fair to gaze upon.

"I have come to solicit a boon, Miss Rydon!"

"Indeed!" she says graciously, nestling down with careless ease on a dark blue velvet lounge which threw up the exquisite shade of her dress to perfection. "May I be pardoned if I exhibit a wee bit of impatience to learn what it is?" tapping a satin-cased foot playfully.

"I—I want you all to come and storm my bachelor abode; to give me the sunshine of your presence next Thursday!"

"What says mamma?"

"I have waited to ask you first," he replies. A radiant smile of triumph passes over her face at the pointed compliment.

"Well, I think I can promise that mamma will grant your request. Is it not so, mamma?"

"Certainly, my darling; I shall only be too pleased to gratify any wish of Sir Lynn's, more especially as it will be a real pleasure to us in this case."

"Do you indorse your mamma's kind reply?" he asks poor Vetch, who feels forlorn and miserably jealous by this time.

"I—I," she stammers. "Please don't ask

me; I always do what mamma bids." Her under lip quivers, and she fairly feels she could sob at the glaring contrast of her dowdy grey gown and fluffy hair straying over her broad, white forehead, with her sister's delicate-tinted toilet, and her silken braids twisted coronal wise around the haughty little head.

"Vetch is scarcely out, you see, Sir Lynn; so we will not include her if, on please," cuts in Mrs. Rydon. "She must get a little more experience before she can be completely emancipated from the school room."

"I particularly desire Miss Vetch should make one of the party," she answers firmly. "Youth is the best time to bestow pleasure and receive it, in my opinion. I have rather original ideas, you may say, but they are deeply rooted."

Mrs. Rydon is too experienced a tactician to touch the subject with her sister, so gives in with a sweet smile, and she gains his point.

As soon as the door closes on the Baronet Blanche summons to deplore the coyness of her wardrobe, and wishes her another into a nervousness upon the solemnity of her having a new dress at all hazards, to suit the momentous occasion.

"Where is papa? I will go to him myself," Blanche says, resolutely. "I wish me to captivate a rich party he must not stint me in a paltry few pounds; it's ridiculous to be so parsimonious with the eldest daughter of the house."

"He is in his study. Perhaps it would be as well for you to ask him," her mother observes somewhat reluctantly. "He may grant you your wish. I am sure it would not do for me to broach such a subject, for I know your papa is very short."

"When I become Lady Myron I will repay both of you; he is sure to settle a very handsome yearly allowance on me," she says, in a burst of generosity.

A cloud of pain comes into Vetch's face, which she bends still lower and lower over her skirts, pretending to search for impossible shades; her fingers feel cold and clammy; every word that has fallen from her sister's lips have stabbed the sensitive, pulsating little heart.

"I shall be the proudest mother in the land when you become Lady Myron, and the happiest; for I feel sure Sir Lynn is a charming and amiable, as well as worthy man."

Mother and daughter embrace each other affectionately, and without giving a thought to the little silent figure by the window she swept out of the room to coax her dotting father to give her a twenty-pound cheque, perfectly assured she had made a conquest, and won the heart of Sir Lynn Myron.

On the appointed Thursday Sir Lynn stands on the steps of his ancestral home to welcome his guests. First to alight from the carriage is Blanche, in a symphony of delicate blue and pink, shrouded in filmy lace, a marvel of the millinery art. But the host's keen glance is attracted to Vetch, who is arrayed in a simple white muslin, a soft primrose sash confining her tiny waist, and a bunch of deep pink may at her throat.

He drank in the sweetness of her fresh young beauty; this simple Maybud, as he termed her mentally, was the one gem on earth he coveted beyond all treasures.

"You must not run away, you are my captive," he pleads, detaining her from following her party, who were exploring the magnificent conservatories.

"Do let me go," she implores, trembling with conflicting emotion.

"Little Maybud," he whispers, tenderly "you did not say that when I bound your wounded arm. Come, look into my eyes, and see if there is ought to alarm you."

She permits him to hold her hands just one blissful moment, gives a timid glance up into those love-laden eyes, then tries to free herself from his strong clasp, but in vain.

"They will miss me; and oh! Sir Lynn,

mamma will be angry. Let me go; oh! do let me go!"

"Sweet little trembler, you ask me an impossibility at this moment, but I will release you on one condition—give me that piece of may and wear this rose instead!" detaching a lovely, creamy tea-rose from his button-hole.

"If I do you will not keep me?" she asks, timidly, burying her rosy lips in the delicate petals of her treasure.

"No; but I shall exact payment for my rose," this with a mischievous smile. "The recipient of such an offering incurs a debt which must be paid."

Not a suspicion crosses her mind of the payment he means to exact! and before she realises his intention he snatches a kiss from the budding lips, one of rapturous bliss to him.

"How dare you?" she says, fiercely, stamping her foot with anger. "What would Blanche and all of them say?"

"What care I!" he replies, recklessly. "Come, Maybud, I must now descend from Elysium to earth, prosaic earth, for here they are upon us."

Away she darts like a lapwing through a side door, but not before her mother catches sight of her hurried exit.

"How bold that child is. It is really provoking to be hampered with hoydens, especially when one is visiting!" Mrs. Rydon whispers to Blanche in a vexed tone.

"What will Sir Lynn think?" echoes Blanche, peevishly; "a chit of a child indeed, to monopolize all his time and attention. It is quite too dreadful."

"Vetah is right enough, my dear; she is only a little giddy," Mr. Rydon adds, by way of pouring oil on troubled waters. "You have a very fine place, Sir Lynn!" Mr. Rydon remarks, animatedly.

"I trust my little girl has not been boring you, Sir Lynn?" says Mrs. Rydon, in her most silvery tone.

"Quite the reverse, my dear madam; she has been charming me immensely," he rejoins, enthusiastically.

"Will you show me the graperies, Sir Lynn?" pleads Blanche, in a tone of sweet imperiousness. Her cream-gloved hand is laid in playful command on his arm, and away he takes her out into the grounds, through a high box hedge into the head gardener's sacred domain.

"Come, Edward, my dear, we are *de trop*; cannot you see Blanche is bent on a little flirtation," urges Mrs. Rydon, as her husband is about to rush after the retreating couple.

"Oh! is it like that?" returns her obtuse spouse, giving vent to a prolonged whistle. "You ladies are sages in wisdom where matters of the heart are concerned!" he adds, admiringly; "and you, my dear, are matchless in everything!"

It was no flattery of the courteous husband, who deemed his handsome partner the incarnation of all that was good and beautiful.

His words evoke a blush of gratified pleasure and affection as rich in its carnation hue and as pure as the day he led her through a breathless admiring throng from the altar.

If husbands would only stop to consider how priceless are these sweet little words of praise to their faithful wives, whose cares multiply with each succeeding year, what stores of undying faith, patience and love would be garnered up for them, sufficient to even forget they were mortals with very clayey instincts!

Crouching in a corner is Vetah, an unseen watcher of the pair who wall within a stone's throw of her; Blanche, ravishingly beautiful, leaning on his arm, and ringing the spring evening stillness with her rippling laughter.

"How dare he kiss me when he likes her best!" she moans, piteously. "I hate him! I—I wish I had never seen him, that I do!"

A mist of blinding tears come into her brown eyes, and her heart throbs with keen, piquant anguish at his perfidy.

The evening is spent most enjoyably by

Blanche, who, being a brilliant singer and player, sings her prettiest songs to please her host and to show off the fine quality of her voice.

"Will you favour me with a song?" Sir Lynn whispers to Vetah.

"No, I never sing," she replies tremulously, "that is, I mean never before anybody."

"Do not believe her; she sings like a lark, Sir Lynn!" intervenes her father, who overhears the request, "only she is rather shy."

"Indeed, papa, I cannot sing to-night," she falters.

"You will, for my sake, when I assure you a refusal will make me very unhappy," he whispers.

"How can you be so false to Blanche?" she returns, reproachfully. "I will not sing to-night!" this defiantly.

A puzzled expression comes into his face; he cannot understand the capacious little maid, who seems to day all bristles.

"What on earth do you mean about being false to your sister? I cannot comprehend you," he says nervously.

"I am hot, and, oh! so ill," she gasps, trying to rise and escape from him.

He follows her out on the terrace in spite of her remonstrances; and there, beneath the silvery radiance of a young May moon, stands watching the pale, angry face, more beautiful in his eyes in its anger than any one of Eve's daughters he had ever beheld.

"I will never forgive you if you get me into disgrace with mamma. My head aches; have some pity on me, and leave me here in the cool."

"What have I done to cause you to be so unlike your gracious, little self? What did you mean about my faithlessness? Are you trying to tease me, sweet one?"

"If you do not go in this instant, I declare I will never speak to you again, Sir Lynn," she persists almost resentfully, her loyal nature revolting at his fickle conduct to her regal sister.

"So I have found you at last, Sir Lynn!" rings out the silvery voice of Blanche, tapping him playfully with her fan, "and star-gazing I verily believe. Now you can help me to find the big bear."

"Hang the big bear," thinks the Baronet, "there seems nothing but vexations to-day," following with his eyes the swift exit of his idol, and longing to pursue her.

"I am not very wise in astronomy," he stammers; "it is too abstruse altogether for my mind to grasp."

"Surely you admire the splendour of the heavens such a delicious night as this?" she pursues sweetly.

"He will take the hint and allude to my beauty surpassing the stars, etc.," she thinks, construing his preoccupied manner to excessive admiration and nervousness.

"If you mean the moon, Miss Rydon, why I endorse your opinion. It is very clear and bright to-night."

"What a terrible backward wooer he is," she murmurs to herself, placing her jewelled arm caressingly on the balustrade to show off its rounded beauty. "I know he is dying to propose, and yet he is so stupid; it is quite tiresome. There are moons and moons," she whispers significantly.

"I must say I never give them much attention," he answers, abstractedly, perfectly deaf and blind to her blandishments, "and the air seems uncommonly fresh for a lady in evening dress," looking at her fair neck and bare arms with fatherly concern, not a pulse beating faster at their glowing charms or the starry eyes that are sparkling with encouraging lights to inspire this bashful lover to make the declaration she believes he is dying to make.

"I am quite warm," she replies, naively; "the air is as soft as an Italian night. I quite love the South."

"I like it very well, but not to go into raptures with it," he observes; "eternal blue skies, and seas, and sunshine glaring upon one

may be a thing of beauty, but as to its being a joy for ever is a question."

"Do you dislike sunshine, Sir Lynn?" she laughs.

"Perpetual, yes; a Peri would pale upon me if she gave me nothing but smiles."

"Then you like women who can look stormy as well as sunny?"

"I confess to a weakness for a few pouts to diversify the honeyed sunniness of a pretty face which, to my mind, becomes insipid if the eyes never kindle into anger, or the face flush with displeasure."

"How original you are? Yet, somehow, though your ideas at first differ from mine, they impress me after a while with the same feeling. I hope you have not too large a share of electric force, Sir Lynn, to convert me to your opinions?" this demurely, as she pulls to pieces the spray of flowers at her bosom, and scatters the fragrant blossoms recklessly at her dainty satin-shod feet, on which glimmer soft pearls.

There are pearly tears in the pretty blue eyes, too—tears of wounded pride and vexation at his perverse coldness.

"Permit me to restore you your flowers, Miss Rydon," he says, stooping and trying to gather up the fragments.

"They are useless now," she says pettishly, flinging the proffered crushed things spitefully down on to the turf beneath, and dashing aside the heavy curtains, and entering the drawing-room in a regular pet.

"I thought he would have replaced the flowers for some gathered by his own hand," she thought angrily. "Instead of that, he presented me with my own back, though they were crushed and spoiled; he is downright cruel."

"Where is the rose I gave you?" he inquires of Vetah when he gets a moment to whisper to her.

"Gone," she retorts, holding down her head shyly.

"You have flung it away," he says, a quiver of pain in his voice. "You might have respected the poor flower even if you despised the giver!"

"I—I did not hurt it," she says innocently. "It would be cruel to destroy anything so sweet."

"Thanks for so small a mercy in sparing my gift, though the owner is left out in the cold," he replies somewhat bitterly.

There is an awful pause; she finds herself unable to retortably, now that his eyes are fixed reproachfully upon her.

He holds her hand in a firm grasp that almost pains her when he places her in the carriage, and she finches; yet they have not turned the corner of the road before she hugs and kisses the glove he had clasped.

"Charming place, Myron Court!" observes Mr. Rydon. "The only thing it lacks is a mistress; but, there, that can soon be remedied."

"And will, no doubt!" repeats his wife, confidently, and looking keenly at Blanche to see how the land lies.

"There are several alterations I should have made if I were mistress, mamma," Blanche cuts in; "especially in the furniture, which is gloomy, worn-out, old stuff; especially in the large dining-room. I dislike spindle-legged chairs and tables; they look like decrepit men, who are tottering into the grave;" this with a little shudder.

"Brightness and prettiness is your forte, dear!" her mother observes gently. "And I am not sure whether your taste is not the best after all, for there is enough to remind us of the decay of all earthly things without surrounding ourselves with the faded grandeur of our dead and gone grandfathers and mothers."

"I positively hate garish things," interposes the silent Vetah, defending valiantly the appointments of Sir Lynn's home. "I love those dear quaint old chairs and tables."

"You are a little silly," retorts Blanche, freezing, "and speak your mind a great

deal too freely. Why, I was as shy as a mouse at your age. I really am quite at a loss to know what Sir Lynn will think of you flying about like some wild creature from room to room. You must learn to be less obtrusive."

"Vetah is only a child in experience as yet, my dear," interposes her father; "she will get more staid as years increase. We must not expect her to assume the grand manners of a duchess, my love!"

"I doubt if she ever could," replies her sister, tartly. "I know I never acted the rôle of a pert hoyden."

"You are totally different natures, my love," her mother says, conciliatingly, wondering what has occurred to ruffle the usual serenity of her eldest daughter.

"Well, how did you enjoy the feast?" asks Hal. "I think it was a jolly shame I wasn't invited too. I expect you had no end of fun and good things."

"I have got a peach and a real ribston pippin for you," Vetah replies, gleefully. "I pocketed them at dessert."

"You are a real out-and-out brick!" says Hal, delightedly, "and I'll take you out fishing to-morrow if you would like to come. But, I say, did *he* peach?"

"What do you mean?" opening wide her eyes in perplexity.

"Did he tell auntie about your tumbling off the tree?"

"Sir Lynn is a gentleman, not a cad," her eyes flashing indignantly at the mere insinuation of such treachery from the man whom she felt in her heart was the soul of truth, even if he were a bit of a flirt.

"You needn't fire up so fiercely. I like him immensely, and so does Cousin Blanche. When she marries him I mean to have a good time of it with his dogs and horses."

"How dare you discuss what you don't know anything about! Blanche would never forgive you if she knew," replies Vetah, vinegar.

"You girls are a lot of muffs—you think a fellow hasn't eyes and ears," he retorts, in an injured tone. "If you don't want us to know your secrets keep them to yourselves."

"You are a nasty, meddling little ape, there," she snaps; "and as for going out fishing with you I refuse, so there."

"Oh! you can sulk if you like, and flare up at a fellow because someone has put you out; but I don't care a fig."

His apple and peach he places on the table with offended dignity untasted. This is too much for Vetah, who, feeling she has been unkind to her favourite, flings her soft dimply arms round his neck and kisses the sun-tanned brow of his little lordship again and again till the old gay sparkle of good humour is restored, and the apple and peach are enjoyed in peace and amity.

When her bonny head nestled on her pillow that night a creamy rose is held in one soft white hand, its sweet perfume mingling with the fragrance of her breath.

CHAPTER III.

THREE days have come and gone since the memorable visit to Myron Court, and Vetah has wandered about the house and grounds listlessly and aimlessly. Not even the merry sallies of her friend Hal can dispel the melancholy which possesses her.

She is ensconced on a low basket chair in her sanctum trying to commit to paper the features of Hal, as she schools herself to believe; but, strange to relate, her pencil has a knack of producing a man's face instead of a roguish boy's.

"How funny!" she murmurs, "that *his* face should come instead of Hal's," and soon her lap is strewn with a dozen or so of sketches of Sir Lynn's handsome features.

All at once she is startled by the abrupt entrance of her sister.

Quick as thought the tell-tale pieces are

snatched up and rolled into a ball, a guilty flush rushing into Vetah's face at being caught in such an occupation.

"How hot you look, Vetah?" Blanche, commences querulously. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," hanging down her head confusedly.

"Knitting or embroidering some useless rubbish for that boy Hal, I suppose," this snappishly. "I came to you to give me a little comfort. I am wretchedly unhappy."

"Unhappy!" repeats Vetah in amazement, "has mamma been cross with you?"

"Mamma! no certainly not. Is there no misery to be borne except domestic ones, child?"

"I don't know," this dolefully. "Tell me, and then perhaps I can comfort you."

Flinging off her feather-plumed hat recklessly, and herself into a cosy lavender chintz chair, she bursts forth.

"It is too bad, too humiliating, just as I thought I had secured him."

"Secured who?" asks Vetah, in surprise.

"Who? Why Sir Lynn, of course. Who is there in this place worth having. How dense you are?"

"What has he done?" she asks, tremulously.

"I'll tell you," trying to dash away the large tears that are welling in her eyes, tears of wounded vanity and mortification. "I—I caught him gazing intently upon a piece of faded may-blossom (a rising sob will not be suppressed at this juncture), then he actually kissed it again and again."

A delicious thrill of joy leaps into her heart as she listens to her sister's dismal confession as the thought flashes. "Can it be my spray he kissed? And have I acted as the false betrayer of my sister's happiness? Does she really care for him? Oh! how she would hate me if she thought that was my piece of may," and she tries to offer consolation to the stricken one, though her conscience pricks her for her perfidy.

"Perhaps you were mistaken?"

"What nonsense!" she replies, pettishly. "I was in the coppice, and was just going to him, flattering myself that he would be absurdly pleased, when I caught him kissing and caressing that odious may, and then place it in his pocket-book solemnly, and return it to his breast-pocket. I was too miserable to wait to see more. Oh! the bitterness of it all, to know he is in love with somebody else, while I have been mad enough to imagine his gifts of flowers and fruit were tokens of his affection for me. I feel I defeat him, and cordially wish I had never seen him," this with spiteful vehemence, a great tear splashing on to her hand. "I will tell mamma, and see what she thinks of his pretended attentions. I am sure I should never have thought of him a second moment if his manner had not been so pointed."

"It is very hard to bear," Vetah falters out spasmodically, thoroughly despising herself for her deceit.

Wiping her eyes with her lace handkerchief she rises and leaves the room, muttering—

"You are too much of a child to enter into my feelings, and instead of giving me a ray of comfort only fret me with your stupidity."

Vetah watches the tall, willowy form, so stately in its reposeful carriage, and wonders again and again if it really was the piece of may he had begged from her, that had caused all the mischief.

"Is it possible or probable," she muses, "for Sir Lynn to care for so insignificant a being as I, when he could have our lovely Blanche?" Then she gazes intently at herself in the glass, tugs at her rebellious curls, that refuse to lie orderly for brush or comb, opens wide those wondrous eyes, so childlike in their innocence; opens wide her mouth, and gives a smile of approval at the rows of even little

pearls, and nods her head sagely, murmuring; "No doubt. Yes, my teeth are nice, and—but as for my hair, why a birch-broom in a fit, as Hal tells me, is a capital simile; and as for my eyes, well, saucers is a downright name for them, as he says. It is too bad to be such a plain creature; what a delicious feeling it must be to feel and know you are really lovely!" And as she smiles and coos in the mirror, she little dreams what a really bewitching fairy she looks, with those soulful eyes brimming over with fun one instant, to fill with passionate latent fires the next, and the fascination that lurks in that tiny rosebud of a mouth, which tantalizes a man, who gazes at it too long, to rifle sweet, stolen kisses from it.

"It cannot be my wretched bit of may," she says, shaking her head despondently. "It would be ridiculous to think of it. Fancy me decked in velvet and satin brocades, seated at that great table, doing the honours as Lady Myron! Why, all my guests would laugh at such a mite as me."

Down she pops at her tiny round table, and rehearses the scene.

"Try some of this *salami* of partridges, it is excellent," trying to assume the airs of a *grande dame*; "and the perigord pie is excellent. Do permit me to send you some. I fancy that was said beautifully."

"Who the dickens are you talking to?" shouts Hal, rushing in with Titmouse, a huge Irish retriever, who certainly belied his name, if size was anything to do with appropriateness.

"I was playing at being a lady."

"What booh! Why don't you come for a scamper with me and old Titmouse, its awfully jolly out after the shower. Just look out at the grass and the gravel! Why, it looks splendid!"

"So I will," she replies, jumping up and kissing Titmouse's curly old head in a transport of delight.

Away they all scamper, Hal with a wild war whoop, the dog leaping about them, mad with pleasure, and sending forth deep bass yelps of joy.

As they are returning through the elder-thicket, who should come swinging along but Sir Lynn.

"Just the young gentleman I wanted to see. I have been inquiring for you;" this as he shakes Vetah's hand, and doffs his straw hat. "I was told you were out somewhere about the lanes."

Vetah's cheeks flush, and her heart beats like a clock, for she can feel his eyes are fixed searchingly on her conscious face.

"I have come to ask you to go for a drive with me to-morrow in my new dog-cart! Kitty is longing for a good spin," meaning a favourite mare. "Will you come?"

"Won't I, Sir Lynn, if aunt says I may," Hal replies, excitedly. "I love driving."

"Then you shall do the chief part of it," he says, kindly.

"What a trump he is! Don't I wish he'd become my cox in reality and marry Blanche," he thinks, keeping a bit in the rear so as not to hamper them with his society too much.

"I want to see you to-morrow afternoon; meet me here," Sir Lynn whispers, eagerly. "Do not refuse. Will you come at four o'clock?"

"Yes," she stammers, "I will come; but it is wrong to ask such a thing."

"You have promised; you cannot take it back now," he answers, gravely.

"You are not very punctual. I began to get anxious," Sir Lynn says, advancing to meet her the next afternoon.

"I was nearly breaking my rash promise," she returns, panting and flushed with running. "If mamma knew I had been so bold she would never forgive me."

"Am I so very dangerous?" he replies, tenderly. "Are you really afraid of me?"

"No," this fearlessly; "I fear only my own disobedience."

"I am the cause of it; on me must rest the blame if we should be found out. Have you guessed the errand I have come here for?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," she returns. "Perhaps you are in some trouble, and wish me to sympathise with you."

He regards her steadfastly, while the wanton spring wind blows her curls in waves across her forehead.

"I'll admit I do desire sympathy, and at your hands. The fact is, my little Maybud, I am crazed with love. You are the one sweet poem of my life, the one jewel I covet. Will you make me blest, and be my wee wifie?"

"I am not big or grown-up enough to be a wife, Sir Lynn!" she replies, in a flutter of nervous agitation. "Besides, they would all disdain me if I was so mean as to listen to such a proposal."

"Why, in Heaven's name, should your people act thus because I love you?" he asks, gravely. "I have loved you from the first moment I saw your face; you are to me the one earthly treasure that would turn a conventional world into a paradise. To be near you is bliss and rapture. Little Maybud, you can never dream how you have twined yourself round my heart, or you would requite my love with a feeling as tender, if not so ardent as mine."

"I like you better than anyone in all the world except Hal," she says, softly; "but if I were to promise you I would marry you mamma and Blanche would cast me off with scorn and hatred—indeed they would."

"Why?" he asks, in perplexed surprise.

"Well, you see, we all thought—that is, oh, dear me! how silly I am, [getting awfully confused]—that you liked Blanche! Mamma and papa thought so, and—and so did I!"

"What an absurd error! I am sure I never acted in any way to cause such a mistake. A man would indeed be a villain who would act so shameless a part!"

"Then you really did not care very much for Blanche?" she wheedles.

"I admire and esteem your charming sister immensely; but I love you with an undying passion," going on passionately. "If you only like me as you say I will make you love me when you are my own. No man could love as I do without inspiring some return. Look at me, and tell me if my heart is not shining in my eyes? Oh, my darling! if you could only know how I have craved for your sweet presence, and the dreary, lonesome hours when we are apart, you would whisper one kind word to make me happy, and send me back to my lonely home in peace. Come," this entreatingly, "put me out of my misery!"

"I tell you I do like you, dearly," she hastens to say reassuringly. "Only you see they all call me a child at home, and you are so old and wise. I don't mean that you are really old" (this as she notices him flinch at her words). "I mean you are so nice and clever, while I am a regular dunce, besides being terribly hoydenish."

"You are perfection in my eyes, Maybud. I am bound to admit I am some years older than you, but that should not be the cause of your keeping me in suspense; uncertainty is maddening, especially when I know I could make you so happy."

"May I have Hal, and mamma, and Titmouse to stay with me as often as I please?"

"As often as you please; you will be queen at Myron Court. I shall be your faithful, loyal subject, and we will go abroad and explore every place worth looking at on our honeymoon." Here he passes his arm round her tiny waist, while his voice sinks into a whisper, as he gazes entranced with ardent love at the piquant face of the one earthly idol his heart has set up to worship.

She shrinks with maidenly coyness from his too ardent embrace, and her face becomes dyed with carnation hues, her little hands tremble within his at the force of his passion; then he places his hand under her chin, and raises her face near to his closer—closer; his

lips meet hers in one long, delicious kiss, the first one of the nature that has ever pressed her innocent ones.

It is too much for the child-like nature, whose soul is stirred beyond even her own knowledge or control; and frightened and sobbing, she lies in his arms scarcely conscious of anything except a sense of shame and fear.

"What have I done, my pet?" he says anxiously. "I have frightened you; I was too rough and have offended you. I will not kiss you again till you give me permission."

"I am faint, and oh! so frightened," she gasps, raising her tear-bedewed face abashed, and glancing at him furtively. "How can I break this wonderful news to them all at home?"

"I will take you home, and make a clean breast of it at once."

"Oh no! please do not, for my sake. Give me time to think; it is all so sudden, and I dread their reproaches."

"Then we will leave it till to-morrow, and I shall come and claim you as my own sweet bride. It may surprise them, but it will soon be a recognised fact, and I fancy they will not refuse me my boon. Am I too presumptuous, sweet one?"

"No, you are very nice! Hal doats on you."

"I wish you would," he laughs, squeezing her fingers and kissing them passionately.

"You will tell them all about how you have cared for me?"

"How you have bewitched me and stolen my heart, and how naughty and tantalising you have acted towards your liege lord."

"You are not that yet," she says demurely.

"Maybud, I have been your liege lord from the first moment I made up my mind to win you. I took you by storm, too, you will admit."

The lodge-gates are now visible, reminding them their time is up—a time of exquisite bliss to the Baronet, who catches the fragile girl in an impassioned embrace, pressing one long mad kiss on the quivering lips before he releases her.

Away she flies, hot, flushed, and trembling, feeling that last kiss has sealed her fate, yet dreading the morrow, when the startling truth would be revealed.

"How they will scorn me when they hear I have taken poor Blanche's lover away. What a wicked girl I must be!" she thinks, as she creeps upstairs on tip-toe to lave her face from the tear stains, and cool its fever before presenting herself downstairs, to the quick eyes of Blanche and Hal.

As the hour approaches, the following morning, for the arrival of Sir Lynn she gets faint and sick, and devoutly wishes yesterday could be blotted out of her life.

"Oh! here he is!" she gasps, hysterically, as at about two o'clock the Baronet rides up to the door on his favourite hunter, looking handsomer than ever, his face beaming with good humour and frank, happy smiles.

A numbed sensation creeps over her, the blood rushes to her temples, then recedes swiftly as she hears the drawing-room door close upon the visitor; then she looks her door, and crouches down in very terror.

Oh! the interminable length of time it seems before she hears her mother knocking at her door and asking to be let in.

"Open the door, Vetah, directly," Mrs. Rydon says, rather sharply.

It is a piteous, woe-begone little face which meets her surprised mother.

"Vetah, my child, you have sadly disappointed me. I never would have believed you capable of deceit. I thought you the incarnation of innocence and candour."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" she cries, passionately. "I am not so wicked as you think. I never knew he cared for me till yesterday. I thought he liked me a little, as a gentleman might like a girl who is a little merry."

"But you must have met him before yesterday, surely?"

"Indeed I never have," she answers,

earnestly. "I am sure I cannot understand why he loved me instead of Blanche. I am not a patch on her—am I, mamma?"

"I am afraid it will break her heart, poor darling!" Mrs. Rydon replies, leaving Vetah's query unanswered, for there is a warm corner in her heart for this sweet, loving little maiden who, though lacking the stately elegance of her eldest daughter, is very precious and winsome in her eyes.

Yet, all the same, she thinks it advisable to show a little coldness, and continues,—

"It is very hard upon Blanche, for she insists upon it that you have been indiscreet, and led Sir Lynn on."

"Shall I give him up, mamma?" she cries, disconsolately; "would that comfort you all? Only tell me, and I will obey."

"Certainly not, child," her mother cries, aghast at the very idea of losing this eligible son-in-law; "the only thing is the cross-purposes that perplexes me, and the grief of poor Blanche."

"She surely doesn't care for a man who prefers another?" Vetah returns. "I should feel ashamed to give a second thought to anyone who treated me indifferently."

"You are my bonny, high-spirited bairn," her mother says, fondly folding her to her bosom and caressing the soft rings of hair tenderly. "If I have spoken too harshly I did not really mean it; it was all so amazing to me at first." Warm, motherly kisses, comforting in their love, bring the smiles back into the wistful face. "I fancy I could have given Blanche with less pain than my wild little Vetah," she says, fondly.

That evening the dinner-table is not graced by Blanche, who has hers sent up to her room.

Vetah looks awfully awkward and guilty, and takes an opportunity when her mother leaves the table to visit the absentee, and finds her reclining on her couch with a fan and smelling bottle, her cheeks very pale, her eyes showing evidence of recent tears.

On Vetah making her appearance her sister says haughtily,—

"Please do not intrude upon my privacy, Vetah. I am suffering intensely with a horrible headache, and the base deceit of one whom I always was foolish enough to think was honest and true."

"I wouldn't have taken him from you for worlds, only he assured me there was no ground for believing he cared for anyone but me. It makes me feel quite wretched to see you so miserable."

"Kindly withdraw, and give your pity where it is required," Blanche replies, bitterly.

"Won't you kiss and make it up?" she pleads, humbly.

"No! I tell you the wound is too fresh! Go! and let me try to forget the whole miserable business!"

Very crestfallen is Vetah as she creeps away, thoroughly imbued with one idea—that she has behaved very cruelly and heartlessly.

Her father neither reproves nor congratulates, but observes a tacit silence on the subject; so she goes in search of her playmate, Hal, whom she finds busily engaged digging for worms in the strawberry-bed for his next day's fishing.

"What on earth are you about?" she says, wonderingly.

"Getting my tackle ready for sport in Sir Lynn's waters. Get away, you clumsy thing you! Why, you'll kill all my worms!"

"Your worms!" she screeches, with a shudder. "Oh! you nasty boy! how can you dabble with such horrid things?"

"Don't be such a goose! Why, if you were a nice hungry roach or dace, you would gobble one down and fancy it a real dainty tit-bit!" he says, coolly.

"I shall be sick in a minute, Hal, if you talk so nasty, just as I want you to speak about the fine times we shall have when—I am mistress of the Court," her voice faltering at the term mistress.

"What a jolly little Lady Myron you will make! Won't I just have a look! I know he is a regular trump."

"He told me, Hal, dear, that you could come and stay as long as ever you liked!" she says, gleefully, stooping down to hug him.

"What a swell you will be! Oh! I shall be as proud as a peacock, and tell all the fellows at Eton how I can ride, and fish, and shoot, and what a grand place you've got. Won't they be jealous?"

"I mean to get you a gun and a dog for your own self, and a horse, and as for pocket-money, why, you shall have sovereigns instead of half-crowns."

"Why, it sounds like some fairy tale, Vetah!" he says, giving vent to a war-whoop to relieve himself. "I'm awfully glad he liked you better than Blanche! She wouldn't have had me with her; she would have given me a wide berth. She calls boys necessary evils, and cubs, and louts. I'm glad she's served out!"

"It is unkind to speak like that," she says, reprovingly. "Blanche has never been unkind to either you or me; please do not discuss her."

"Oh! I don't mean any offence," he returns, sheepishly, gathering up his box of worms with tender care.

She slips her hand into his and away they trudge together into the house, as guileless and wild a pair of children as ever chased a gaudy butterfly!

CHAPTER IV.

It is Vetah's bridal morn, and a real bridal one it is. The September sun is warm and golden in its splendour; the flowers are waving gently in the balmy breeze, the trees rustle musically, while the birds carol their loudest, as if they knew their favourite who fed them in the bitter winter is to become a bride, and they must unite their voices in thanksgiving.

The little church on the hill is gay with countless flowers, steeping the warm atmosphere with delightful odours; an expectant crowd has wedged itself in every corner to get a view of the bridal procession.

The march from *Athalia* passes out sonorous and grand, as Vetah passes down to the altar, led by her father, and followed closely by a train of pretty girls, whose radiant smiles and ravishing gowns make all the young men's hearts go pit-a-pat, while the ladies nudge each other, and gaze in silent admiration.

Jewels priceless ones, crown the little brown curly head of the bride, and flash their soft lights on her arms and neck; the famous Myron family diamonds, a dagger of pearls and brilliants, fasten the train on her shoulder.

But her grandeur sets light on her young head, for her mind is absorbed by the solemnity of the wholeness, and she realises, for the first time since her betrothal, the serious step she is about to take.

Pearly tears spring into her eyes as her mother presses forward after the ceremony, and folds her in her arms, to kiss her as only a mother can; then all is a kind of hazy dream, as she finds herself being led back to the carriage by her husband, the organ thundering forth the Wedding March, and Hal looking in his page's dress, as he sees his playmate thrust out of his sight, as if he could weep with jealousy.

"Poor Hal," she falters, as the carriage dashes through the crowd, "I never saw him look so sad."

"Mine at last, mine alone!" her husband says ecstatically, "he has basked in your sunny presence enough, it is my turn now; Victory is mine."

She lies her head in his shimmering lace shawl on his breast, and he sits drinking in the entrancing picture, trying to fix it on his memory till time is no more for him.

"If a time should ever come, my pet, when any little coldness or misunderstanding should

arise between us, remind me of this blissful moment when, with your dear head on my breast, I now am gazing at the dearest treasure earth contains for me: I vow the memory of it will chase away the darkest anger. Will you grant my wish, sweetheart, on this the happiest day of my existence?"

"Yes," she murmurs, tremulously; "but oh, Lynn! it seems all a dream. Is it really true? Am I your—your wife?"

"Yes, Lady Myron," he replies, proudly; "you are my wife, and the fairest dame that ever set foot in Myron Court. I mean to have your portrait taken without delay in this pretty finery, and then our sons and daughters" (this audaciously) "shall see how lovely their mother was on her wedding morn!"

A troop of butterflies of fashion await them as Sir Lynn leads her up the steps. Blanche, looking as fair as a lily in trailing peach-satin robes, receives her and kisses her, to show all is pardoned and forgotten.

Then Hal pushes forward, and regardless of Vetah's gorgeous array hugs her like a young bear and whispers,—

"You look stunning, you do! When I marry I shall have a bride just like you, dress and all!"

They all laugh at his boyish simplicity, causing his face to get as red as a peony.

When the bride and bridegroom start for their honeymoon tears mingle with the smiles on many faces, and Hal betakes himself to an old spider-haunted arbour; and there, unseen, fights out his agony of saying good-bye alone, and sobbing bitterly, waits forth,—

"I never thought it would be so hard to say it. I could almost hate that fellow Lynn. If I was a man I'd fight him; he'd no right to take her away from us."

And thus ended Vetah's wedding-day—brightness and shadow, smiles and tears—showing how incomplete is all earthly pleasure or pageants—how futile our attempts to perfect anything conceived by mortal minds. Even the flowers are commencing to droop their heads that deck the nuptial breakfast; and the wreath of orange-blossoms lies neglected on the little white bed that Vetah would never sleep in again, just as she had cast it off in her haste to be dressed for her journey. Its reign is short-lived, and now it is even forsaken and forgotten.

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT is my wife puzzling her pretty head about?" Sir Lynn says, affectionately, about two months after their marriage, as seated in their home at Myron Court she tilts her chair to and fro abstractedly, a small pucker on her forehead, as if in some troubled thought.

"Lynn," she falters, nervously, "I have been wondering if you ever loved anyone as much as you do me!"

"What on earth has put such notions into your head?" he says, almost harshly.

"Do not be cross, dear," she pleads; "you might tell me some of your love romances."

"I never knew what real love meant," he returns, a shade of impatience crossing his face.

"But a love of some sort you felt, as you place a stress on *real* love. Well, tell me about that love."

"I wish you would not talk such nonsense, Vetah," he says, humbly.

"Is love nonsense, then? Why I thought you said heaven was love?" she protests.

"Heaven is where you are when you don't tease me. Love and I were strangers till I saw your winking face, be assured of that. Of course all men have some imitation of the grand passion when they are fledglings; it is almost as common as measles, only more dangerous, if they are not strong enough to throw off the disease."

"You speak very feelingly, Lynn," she says, mischievously.

"I only speak as a man would who has passed through the fire."

"Then you have loved someone else, and I was right? It must be funny to love twice! Perhaps I shall. Who knows?"

He shivers and draws her almost fiercely to him, as if he would defy such awful words to come true.

"What in the name of all that is sacred put such detestable ideas into your mind? Do you wish to drive me frantic?" he asks, hoarsely. "Do you know what horrible import those words convey? Oh! my love! my girl wife! you are mine—mine alone. No living man shall tear you from me; it would kill me now to lose you. You will never desert me, will you?"

Large beads of perspiration stand on his brow, and his face is deadly in its pallor as he holds her closer and closer to him, as if he fears she will be snatched from his arms.

"I; no, Lynn, dear!" she answers falteringly, trembling with the force of his emotion and strange looks. "It was only caprice, a girl's foolish curiosity, that made me ask you such silly questions. I always was a little goose."

"Such conversation pains me, dear one! it probes me to the quick. Such a nature as mine is like the sea, unfathomable in its depths for good or evil when aroused."

She cannot follow him in his explanation. She is too young and simple to gauge his love for her or its intensity.

"You will kiss me a pardon?" she coaxes, nestling up to him and placing her tempting mouth close to his.

"Rest assured, darling wife, no woman ever crept into my heart except you," he whispers tenderly, kissing the dewy lips over and over again.

The domestic breeze is finished; together they walk into the grounds to give orders to the head-gardener about the planting of a rosery in honour of the bride's coming home.

"What a fairy-like, little lady she is," mutters that worthy, as he watches his new mistress coming towards him, a veritable Hebe in her soft, pearly, morning gown with its flots of pale-blue ribbons floating in the wind.

He stands twirling his cap nervously in his huge rust-coloured hands, lost for fitting speech to address her now that he is at last actually close to her.

"Lady Myron has come herself to see you about the rosery, Coleman," his masters says encouragingly, noticing the nervousness of the man.

"I am sure I am highly honoured, my lady," he blurts out confusedly. "I would have furbished myself up if I had but known you had been doing me such an honour. I hope you will excuse me, my lady," bowing for about the twentieth time.

"I am quite content with you as you are, Coleman," she observes, sweetly. "It is impossible to be spick-and-span when one is gardening. I know, because I have done a lot myself, and love it dearly. Will you permit me to invade your territory and do a little sometimes? I promise to obey instructions."

His face beams with gratified pride, and he answers eagerly,—

"Every greenhouse shall open its doors in less than a trice, my lady, and I and my men be your willing, faithful servants."

"Lors, bless you, if you could have seen her smile at me it would have made your heart go bump, it would," he relates to cook that evening, down in the cosy corner by the huge fireplace, where he is imbibing a piping hot glass of Scotch whisky.

"Lor, my good man you'll go crazed, you will," she laughs, a little jealously, "just because our lady spoke civilly. I am sure her sweet face couldn't help smiling, so you needn't be so proud. Why, Eliza says she patted her on the cheek and called her a nice girl; and to-morrow I shall wait on my lady for the orders for dinner, and I'll bet you a wager she'll like me and say something pretty."

"Oh! you needn't be so uppish Mistress Barton, and give yourself airs because you come last in the field."

Barton, having a sneaking regard for the man of flowers and fruit, ends the little passage-of-arms by brewing another steaming glass of grog, which brings the cheery smiles back to his ruddy face, and smirks of a coquettish nature from plump Mrs. Barton.

The prophecy came true Sir Lynn predicted when he said that Vetch would be queen of Myron Court; for she was not only queen of her lovely home, but reigned in the hearts of every member, from the lowliest to the highest, causing many squabbles among them, if they thought she dispensed her smiles more freely to one than another.

Right royal hospitality is kept up at Christmas—the first one spent by the Baronet under his ancestral roof for many years—and he is determined to celebrate it by filling it from the cellars to the roof with guests in honour of his sweet young mistress.

Hal's war-whoop rings out sharp and piercing through the rooms and staircases, and a small dormitory crammed with things his heart loveth—guns, fishing tackle of every conceivable kind—while Titmouse is also permitted to make one of the party, to the boy's infinite delight.

Vetch flits about from room to room to see that everything is trim and cosy for this influx of visitors; holly and mistletoe hung by her own fair hands adorn every nook and corner, and blazing fires roar and splutter up the wide, old-fashioned chimneys.

"Is this not lovely!" she pants, breathlessly, flying down the stairs three at a time, loaded with boxes of bon-bons.

"No, emphatically no," he answers, swiftly. "It is anything but lovely to see you fatiguing yourself with these (taking the parcels out of her arms). Why do you not call one of the women, child?"

"I like to be busy, Lynn, dear!" she laughs. "Oh! this darling Christmas! I shall never forget it. I used to play at being a lady, and walk about our drawing-room as proud as a peacock, never dreaming I should be one in reality; this with a comical little strut and twirl that brings a smile into her husband's face, as he murmurs—

"My little child-wife, I pray that Heaven may spare you to me fresh and pure, untouched by the blasts of winter, as you are now."

Blanche is among the first batch of guests who arrive; she is wreathed in her most fascinating smiles, for she has coaxed her father out of a very heavy cheque, which has been expended in the freshest and newest styles of gowns.

"What a truly grand old place this is, Vetch!" she remarks, admiringly; "really you ought to feel very happy?"

"So I do, dear, very happy; but I fancy Lynn has a little to do with it," this roughly.

"Do you mean to tell me you would feel the same towards him if he took you to some out-of-the-way hole?"

"I did not marry Myron Court, Blanche," she observes; "though I admit I dearly love every stick and stone; but there, that is because it is Lynn's. Why, his cradle is in the nursery—such a funny old thing!"

"What a romantic child it is still. I thought you would have become wiser by now," Blanche returns, half playfully; "but there, you always were very childish."

"Suppose we talk about the people who are coming to stay with us?" Vetch interposes. "You surely have some curiosity to hear their names?"

"Of course; I am dying to hear who they are, and their pedigree and income," she laughs.

"Well, there is, first and foremost, Lord Charles Dynivor, a bachelor, and Sir Robert Chanoy. Those are the ones who rejoice in a bundle to their names; two or three especial old chums of Lynn's, and a regular crowd of

pretty matrons and girls; dost thou like the picture?"

"It will no doubt prove a merry party," she replies, animatedly; "and I think I shall enjoy myself immensely. I have come well provided with no end of the prettiest things in millinery I could get."

"That reminds me I have something for you, Blanche, dear," Vetch says, in a transport of glee, going to a cabinet, and taking a case and flinging it into her sister's lap.

"What is it?" Blanche says, in surprise.

"Your Christmas gift—the first real one I have ever given you," this with a sparkle of pride and joy in her pretty eyes, as she watches her sister unclasp the case.

"Why, they are priceless!" Blanche cries, in amazement.

"They are for you, dear, handsome old love of a sister," she replies, falling on her knees at her feet, and pursing up her lips for a kiss.

"It is my peace-offering, dear!" this softly.

"Let me place them round your neck and arms, just to see how grand you will look by-and-by when you queen it downstairs?"

The gift so magnificent, and so sweetly given, softens the nature of Blanche towards this loving little sister; and in a burst of genuine gratitude she returns her kiss with another equally affectionate, and the feud between the pair is forgiven and forgotten.

Vetch is quite proud of her later on, when, clad in some frosted gown of delicate whiteness, adorned with sprays of silver thistles and holly berries, she floats in and captivates all the men at once, who make up their mind to be the lucky individual to take her into dinner.

Lord Charles Dynivor is the fortunate one, much to the disgust of the longing ones, who glare fiercely at their more fortunate rival. Before the evening is well on his lordship falls desperately in love, much to the satisfaction of Vetch and Blanche, for he is a very great favourite of hers and her husband's.

"You have made a complete conquest, Blanche! I never saw a fellow so smitten, so fairly gone, in my life," laughs her brother-in-law, as she bids him good-night. "He's a capital match, too—ten thousand a-year rent-roll, I know."

"He is very nice," she replies, smiling sweetly, and kissing Vetch with the frank, sisterly warmth of old.

"Well, now that we are alone, Lynn, for the first time to-night, you might tell me how I looked and acted as hostess?"

He gazes with a world of tender love and admiration on the dainty blue velvet-gowned figure, the rich folds clinging in waves around her slight form, and the Myron diamonds gleaming in her hair, on her arms and neck; but not eclipsing the dancing light in her starry eyes, that are shining doubly bright with excitement.

"You were the queen of the evening, my pet. Why, all the men were enchanted with you! General Maxwell declares you will be the beauty of the coming season. Didn't I exult in the thought that no one could steal my Maybud away from me!" he says, rapturously, bending down and kissing her ardently.

"Blanche was the queen, dear Lynn; she looked positively lovely to me."

"So she did; but, you see, there is a charm, a nameless, alluring something about my little wifey which to most men is more enthralling even than set features and stately grace."

"So long as I am always lovely in your eyes, Lynn, I am satisfied," she replies, softly, gathering up her trailing skirts, and hastening to her room while he enjoys a quiet cigar, as is his usual custom.

A ball finishes the festivities at the Court, and in the dim, half-lit conservatory Lord Dynivor declares his love to Blanche. There is a subtle fragrance everywhere, and the splash of a fountain mingles with the strains of the band.

She listens to his impassioned words with

averted face, on which blushes and triumph mingle. A glittering ring is slipped on her finger, and a betrothal kiss seals the rest.

Flushed and excited she flies to Vetch, who is pulling on a second pair of gloves up in her dressing-room.

"I can see what has happened!" Vetch exclaims. "Lord Dynivor has proposed and been accepted. I am so glad, dear, and wish you all the happiness in the world; he is a charming man!"

"I knew you would be pleased, Vetch. Oh! dear sis! I am so happy, and I love him so much," she falters, clinging round Vetch's neck, and hiding her face lest she should see the tears and blushes that will not be repressed.

"Then you really like him better than you did Lynn?" Vetch observes simply.

"I liked him, but I love Charles," she replies earnestly; "and only fancy, we are both to be presented next season together; Lady Charles Dynivor on her marriage—Lady Lynn Myron! Doesn't it sound nice?" smiling through her tears.

"Yes, it seems unreal to me. I shall pinch myself to see if it isn't all a dream," buttoning the fourteenth button, "or a Christmas story."

"A very substantial reality, I think, since you have to make haste downstairs. Lynn was inquiring of everybody where you were, so you had better hurry down while I attend to this tiresome hot face of mine."

In the bridal dress Vetch wore a few months back she queneed it at her first ball.

"Where have you been, Maybud?" her husband whispers anxiously, as she once more joins her guests.

"I have been making myself presentable, see!" holding up her clean-gloved hands.

"Coats have a habit which I am sure is very ungallant, of soiling our poor gloves dreadfully."

"I want you to give me the next dance," he says, "if you are not engaged. I know it is thought bad form to dance twice with one's wife, but this is our first Christmas in our own home, and your first ball."

"I cannot see why we shouldn't dance every dance in the programme if we like, Lynn?" she says innocently. "I am sure it would be lovely!"

The band commences a delightful waltz; he clasps the little snowy satin figure's waist, and soon they are whirling in dreamy bliss her feet scarcely touching the waxen floor.

As he leads her into the refreshment room he whispers—

"I wish, Maybud, we could carry out what you said just now. I cannot endure seeing other fellow's arms round your waist. I feel a kind of shudder."

"I'll sit out the other dances if you like," she answers, unconcernedly.

"No, my pet, it would look peculiar. I must get accustomed to it; no doubt I shall in time," this with a grim smile.

But, nevertheless, Sir Lynn makes up his mind not to have many balls when he retires to his chamber that night, or, rather, early morning.

"It does not seem the thing, say what you like, for men to hold the one dearest treasure of his life—his wife—in their arms, and drink in the sweetness of her face. Hang it all, I'd start a fashion that all married women should only dance with their husbands if I were the Prince of Wales."

Vetch, tired out with her revels, lies beside him in a soft, childlike sleep, perfectly ignorant of the battle between love and jealousy her husband is fighting out with himself.

He exults secretly when he bids the last guest good-bye, and they settle down once more to their old peaceful life. Vetch is too precious to him to be permitted to scatter her smiles broadcast. He feels like a miser who likes to gaze on his gold alone; and rejoices even when Hal, laden with hampers of goodies, is packed off to Eton, and feels quite ill-tam-

pered when he sees Vetah's eyes full of tears at parting with her playmate.

"You will quite spoil the boy," he says grumpily. "He will get dissatisfied at school, my love!"

She does not answer, but gulps down her tears, and the subject is dropped. The Baronet is now supremely happy at last.

CHAPTER VI.

SPRING is come again, bringing with it a pink and white sheet of blossom that resembles tinted snow; the golden primrose peeps forth from its mossy couch; while the perfume of violets is everywhere.

In a bright, sunny room is Vetah sitting here, there, and everywhere, attended by Eliza, her favourite maid.

"Lor' my lady, the cradle looks nothing but a bower of lace, it does!" exclaims the maid admiringly.

"You really think it looks pretty? I am so glad," she says, clapping her hands. "You see, Sir Lynn, was cradled in it. I wonder how it was trimmed?"

"I heard the housekeeper say that old Mrs. Toogood said it was blue velvet and gold fringe my lady."

"How grand!" replies her mistress; "he must have looked a darling!"

"He did, my lady, so they say. My lord's mamma they do say, couldn't bear him out of her sight lest someone should steal him."

A fairy-like basket, with gold-backed brushes, soft as silk, and other trifles, lie beside a low easy chair and there, piled up in a huge wardrobe, are the dainty little garments lawn and lace, all marked with the Myron crest.

"This will be my favourite room; it is the pleasantest in the house. Look, Eliza, there are the hills and the sea in the distance, and all the prettiest flowers close at hand. Could baby eyes look out upon a brighter picture?" this animatedly.

"No my lady, it is splendid!" echoes Eliza, earnestly.

"I will go down now and fetch Lynn," she thinks. "He will be pleased to see his dear old room so transformed and pretty."

Very softly she descends the staircase to the library, where she knows her husband is looking over his quarterly accounts.

A large screen shuts off the draught at the door, voices in loud altercation, one a stranger's—arrest her entrance.

She stands, though in a kind of dreamy stupor, spellbound, afraid to fly or enter; then some words are spoken that seem to sear her brain, to petrify the blood, as it rushes wildly to her heart.

"Great Heaven!" she murmurs, "save me," reeling, but trying to support herself against the screen. "Am I mad or is this some horrible nightmare? Oh! I shall suffocate—I shall die!"

There is a piercing shriek, shrill and heart-rending, followed by the sudden appearance of Vetah, who staggers into the room to fall at her husband's feet.

"Say it is false! Oh, Lynn! say it is false!" she gasps out at last.

"If I could strangle you I would, you fiend!" he hisses out savagely to a woman who stands looking on with baleful triumph in her vicious face.

"So this is the girl who you thought to put in my child's place?" she says vengefully. "Truly a pretty spectacle!"

"Begone! wretched murderess! lest I lose my manhood and do you some fearful mischief."

"It is very hard to find your lawful wife cropping up at such a time, when you thought all was so comfortably settled, and number two installed in her home," she sneers.

"Tell me, woman, if you have a spark of human feeling, if your awful words are true, and if you are the mother of—of his wife?"

Vetah asks, hoarsely, raising herself up with difficulty, and holding out her hands as if to ward off a deadly blow.

"Yes!" the woman answers firmly.

"Lynn! Lynn! then what am I?" she moans, piteously. "What will become of our child?"

The bonny head droops, the slight form sways forward to be caught in Sir Lynn's arms.

"Monster in human shape, go! You have killed my wife!" he roars in frenzied rage.

"Your m—," she retorts, mockingly, but the terrible epithet is never finished; for the Baronet having placed his lovely burden on a couch, thrusts the woman out into the lobby and bangs the door upon her.

CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK passes by, an eternity of torture to Sir Lynn, who, like some unquiet spirit, paces from morning to night outside Vetah's apartment.

At last the summons comes, but it finds him trembling like a reed in a wintry blast; his eyes are dim and sunken, the result of nightly vigils and remorseful agony.

"Vetah!" he says, hollowly, approaching her couch, where pale and listless she lies, with eyes laden with reproachful anguish, though she tries hard to stifle it from his observation, "will you not say something to me? Heaven knows what torture I have passed through, being denied even the one consolation of seeing my poor suffering angel!"

"I have been ill," she says, brokenly, a sob in her voice, while her poor lips quiver; "and they wouldn't let me see anybody; all was dark and awful!" this with a shudder.

He kneels by her side and takes one of her hands—such tiny snowy things they look—and a scalding tear splashes down on them which she wipes off with her cheek caressingly.

"My love! my little martyred wife!" he cries, bursting into a passion of tears, "may Heaven bless you for your sweet sympathy!"

"Do I comfort you, Lynn?" she says, tenderly.

"Yes, it is balm to my weary soul to know you pity me and believe me not so vile as I thought you would."

"I would stake my life upon your honour; you have been cruelly deceived. Is it not so, Lynn?"

"Yes, my love, you have arrived at the truth. My wretched past I thought was buried in the grave with one of the most infamous, vilest of her sex that ever took the shape of woman to lure a man to destruction."

"Poor, persecuted Lynn!" she sighs, a world of infinite tenderness in her voice; "we must be brave to meet our new life unflinchingly."

"You mean part," he groans, his whole frame shaking with intense agony at the awful prospect of parting from one whose presence is unutterable bliss.

"Yes, Lynn, and you will help me to bear our cross," clasping his hands tightly to her bosom; "be my strength. I am only a poor little reed."

"Vetah!" he cries, wrought to desperation, a fearful temptation seizing him; "my life, my love, doubly hallowed to me now by this terrible trial, let us fly from England, and in our new life bury this horrible dark secret in our own hearts. You are bound to me by ties firmer than any woven by the laws of our church."

"It cannot be, Lynn," she answers, shrinking from him with alarm in her brown eyes.

"Death—ah! even a thousand deaths would be preferable," he falters, despairingly. "Oh! my love—my little Maybud! it should not be at your hands I should find my living grave. Have some pity on me—give me the opportunity of atoning for the deep wrong I have unwittingly done you."

"I dare not listen to you, Lynn, if you persist in tempting me to do that which would

make me so base, so sinful, that I could never look into the eyes of my dear mother again!"

He clasps her passionately to him, and gazes at the wan young face so full of pain and suffering, yet stamped with a holy innocence, giving it a radiance not born of earth. It makes him feel abashed at the proposition, wrung from his erring, passionate nature.

"You have conquered," he says, after a pause. "I am wrong, you are right. I will go, though it may tear my heart-strings."

"Lynn, my love, my love!" she cries; "you are now my own noble Lynn, dearer to me than in the hour I—I—your—," but here the trembling lips are unable to complete the word, and her face crimsoned at the shame of it all.

"My honoured wife, before Heaven," he adds, solemnly, "and man too—for our secret must never be revealed—I will bribe this wretched creature, who, for her own fell purposes of revenge has led me to believe she was dead, never to cross your path. She has her price—gold is her god; she shall have it and to spare."

"Where will you go?" she inquires, gravely.

"Anywhere," he answers recklessly; "become a wanderer seeking rest but finding none."

"Seeking rest and peace at the hands of the Great Comforter, whom we have knelt together and prayed to in the old days, and always found kind and merciful," she interposes, a seraphic smile illumining her face.

"Will you pray for me?" he says, his voice thick with tears.

"Yes," she whispers softly; "and—and our child's first petition shall be for our absent one."

She couldn't say the sweet term father or husband, poor stricken dove; even this sacred name is denied her, yet not one thought of blame does she harbour in her generous heart for the man who has heaped such misery on her innocent head.

"If he has erred he has grievously suffered," she thinks, as she notes the ravages a week has made in his handsome face.

"I will frame an exoner for my hurried departure, so as to close the mouths of the servants," he says more calmly. "They must never suspect the truth; their prying eyes must be blinded at the sacrifice of truth itself."

"Do what you deem best," she returns submissively. "Only promise to write sometimes; it will sweeten the loneliness of my existence."

"Every month I will send you all news of myself; but I am tiring you, my own love. I must talk to you further upon this tomorrow."

"No," she says impulsively. "We shall say good-bye now; it would not be safe to meet again. We are brave now, Lynn; the strength is given us. We dare not play with fate!"

He bows his head like a prisoner receiving his death sentence, knowing the justice of the doom pronounced by his judge.

"Vetah, my love, I will obey," he answers huskily, his lips twitching nervously. "It would be sacrilege to try and persuade you from what is right."

He folds her to his heart in one long embrace, pressing burning kisses on eyes, lips and brow.

Very still she lies on that panting breast that may never shelter the little head, perhaps, in life again.

"Farewell, my own love!" he murmurs, placing her gently on the couch. "Farewell," and reels from the room with a stifled groan, feeling as if he would suffocate.

The servants look aghast with astonishment when their master declares his intention of leaving the Court.

"I never heard such a mad freak in all my born days," observes cook to Coleman, in strict

confidence. "In the delicate state of the poor lamb's health and all, it's downright brutish, it is," snapping her fingers viciously in the direction of her master's room.

"It do about puzzle me, too! Why, I was never so taken aback in all my life when he comes to me and says, Coleman, I am called away on business of the most vital consequence, which will admit no delay; be faithful and true to your mistress while I am away. And true as I am standing here, he puts his hand into mine, and tears come into his eyes. I'm blest if I didn't feel queer myself too (at this juncture his bird's eye handkerchief comes out, and he blows his nose vigorously). It was on the tip of my tongue to say there ought to be no business to drag a gentleman from his wife at such a time as this; but there was such a look in his face that I didn't dare to say what I was bursting to say."

"Well, it's all a mystery," Mrs. Barton declares, shaking her head sagely. "But we must do our best to stop those hussies' sharp clacks; that's our business, at any rate."

"You may take your affidavit I shall be mum, and stop any of their gossip. Why, Heaven bless the sweet mistress, I'd fight for her—aye, to the last drop of blood in my veins."

"So will I, Coleman," she says emphatically. "So here's my hand on it," giving him her plump rosy hand, which he holds unnecessarily longer than the occasion demands.

"It's a pretty hand!" he whispers, confidently. "It's a pity not to mate it with a stronger one—like this, for instance."

"Nasty, brown thing," she simpers; "why, it looks as brown as your old mould you are always dabbling with."

"My mould gives you plenty of fruit and vegetables," he retorts, huffily.

"So it does, Coleman, dear!" this is said so gushingly that he finds it necessary to place his arm around her ample waist, just to try the length of his arm, and then a little shriek tells the astonishing fact that he has dared to rifle a kiss from those ripe lips—a kiss which cements two faithful hearts to the fortunes of the house of Myron.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE the roses fade a new-born rosebud blooms, fresh and fragrant, at Myron Court—a tiny cherub, with large brown eyes and dimpled feet and hands.

Vetah gazes wistfully till her eyes get dim at the soft mite, and drinks in draughts of nectar—the sweet nectar of a young mother's love and pride for her first-born.

"What a darling it is!" Mrs. Rydon says fondly, as she decks baby in its lace-decked robes; "how Lynn could desert you at this moment I cannot comprehend. He must be devoid of heart altogether!"

"Mamma, do not, I beg, say such things!" Vetah pleads. "I tell you he was compelled; cannot you believe me?"

"I detest secrets of any kind, and this looks very much like one since you are unable to explain the business that has driven him away from his wife and child at the very crisis of her life even!"

"Forbear, mother mine, if you love me!" Vetah implores. "Do you think I would defend Lynn if he was not worthy my love?"

"I am deeply grieved, dear child, to vex or wound you," Mrs. Rydon returns, anxiously; "but a mother's love is jealous, almost exacting. It is the feeling you will experience when this dear little one grows up."

"I feel awfully jealous already," Vetah says, smiling through her tears—tears at the bitter thoughts that hers and baby's life is to be desolate, with no loving protector to lean upon, but to stand alone—cruelly alone—in the world with a ban of dark suspicion hovering over their heads.

"I would not feel it so keenly, only there's Blanche's wedding to take place next month, and Lynn consented to be best man. It will cause so much comment," she says, querulously.

"It is impossible for everybody to keep up their engagements made months previously," she replies, half chidingly. "Besides, it is wrong to ascribe false motives of a husband to a wife because he is forced to be absent. Trust him for my sake, at least, even if you do not for his own!"

"I promise never to allude to the subject, child, since it is so painful to you. Pardon the over-anxious feeling of a mother," she says, soothingly, seeing how averse Vetah is to be questioned further concerning her husband.

July, hot and glowing, with countless flowers scattering their vivid blossoms and scent over turf and well kept gravel paths.

It is the day that Blanche is to become Lady Dynivor, and never was there a fairer or more regal bride, and so Vetah whispers affectionately into her ears as she assists her to adjust her veil.

"It is too bad of Lynn to fail us on this day of all days," Blanche says, peevishly. "It looks like a slight to Charles. I thought he would relent, even at the last moment. You said he might, did you not?"

"Yes! I—er—that is, I thought he might," she stammers, reddening guiltily. "But he has not forgotten you. The stars are really lovely, are they not?" this coaxingly.

"Yes, they are very fine," she says, as the jewels are fastened in her golden hair, "but—"

"There is mamma calling, and the carriage is at the door, so we must hasten!" observes Vetah, glad to change the subject, knowing there will be no opportunity for a recurrence of it in the hurry and bustle of the ceremony and departure of bride and groom.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE years have come and gone since Sir Lynn left his wife and home, a wanderer in strange lands.

His child is now a little fairy who can lisp and prattle, to the joy of her mother's heart. Coleman worships the mite who toddles after him, her pinafore crammed with flowers, her face beaming with sunny smiles.

"I want woses for papa, Tolmy," she says, tugging at his white linen jacket. Tolmy is her name for Coleman.

"Roses for papa!" he cries in amazement. "How can you give your papa roses, Miss Maybud?"

"I'm doing to pull dem to pieces, and mamma is to puts dem in a letter," she says, wisely, nodding her head comically.

Some of the finest specimens are plucked out of the greenhouse for the dainty little lady, who, by way of thanks, says—

"You may tise me if oo likes, Tolmy, ony pease don't hurt me with your brown chim."

"I shall make a mistake and eat you up if you don't mind," he laughs, catching up the child, and kissing her very cautiously, lest his beard should offend her little ladyship.

"A woman wishes to see me, Eliza?" Vetah says, in surprise. "What is her name?"

"That she will not give, my lady. All she says is that she must see you or Sir Lynn, that it is a case of life and death, and she looks more like a ghost herself than a living woman, she is so terribly worn and ill."

"Poor thing!" her mistress says, pityingly; "perhaps she is in want; give her food."

"Oh no, my lady! She is well-dressed enough, my lady."

"Send her into me without delay," Vetah replies, quickly, but starts with some instinctive dread as a tall, gaunt woman enters and raises her veil.

"Who are you?" she asks, tremulously, "and what do you want with me?"

Falling on her knees at the feet of Vetah, the woman says, in a wailing tone,—

"I want to die in peace, to repair a cruel injury done to you and your husband."

"What do you mean?" gasps the astounded Vetah.

"That my daughter, *his* former wife, was dead when he married you. Here is the certificate of her death. It was for greed and spite I came here last, and told him she was living. Can you forgive me?"

"You ask me something so hard, woman. If you could only realise what I have suffered, and still suffer, my husband driven forth a wanderer, the ban of shame cast upon me and my innocent child! Sir Lynn is not here, and I thank Heaven it is so. He would forbid my forgiving you."

"Mamma, mamma, 'ook at the woses I see dot for papa," cries Maybud, dashing in gleefully, her little hands full of flowers.

Seeing a stranger she hides behind her mother's skirt, peeping forth timidly at the woman, whose frame is shaken by contrite sobs.

"Poor 'oman kying, mamma; 'ook, me ky too."

Then before Vetah can stay her purpose Maybud darts out like a sunbeam, and throwing her dimpled arms around the suppliant's neck, kisses her, cooing tenderly,—

"Don't ky, 'oman, mamma won't be koss if you say you will be dood."

This is more than Vetah can withstand; raising her up she says,—

"Woman, go in peace; you are freely forgiven."

Still weeping, she impulsively kisses little Maybud, murmuring,—

"May Heaven bless and shield you."

The wanderer has returned to the fold, a gladsome light in his eyes, a smile on his sun-tanned face, for now the cloud of shame and despair has passed away out of his life for ever. The reunion is too sacred to lift the veil. Suffice it to say that the fearsome secret is always well kept. He with his child on his knee, and Vetah's head resting lovingly on his shoulder, whispers,—

"Never to part, darling. I feel happy now." And so ends the story of "Sir Lynn's Choice."

[THE END.]

A carpet merchant in Vienna has a curious collection of ancient woollen and linen cloths. Many of them have been taken from tombs. Some of the fragments make up an entire Roman toga, which is said to be the only one in the world. There are a great many embroidered dresses and a deal of knitting and crewel-work. Double chain-stitch seems to have been as familiar to the Egyptian seamstresses, sewing with bone needles, as it is to modern women. It is curious to find that the common blue check pattern of our dusters and work-house aprons was in general use among the Egyptians more than a thousand years ago.

GERMAN LIFE.—Writing from Vienna, a lady says, that in every phase of life there is much to admire. There is none of that reckless extravagance in house-furnishing, or dress, and in all externals, as in France or England. A young married couple suit the number of their rooms and the number of flights they are high, to their means, and no one thinks of cutting acquaintances because their snug little sitting-room serves as reception-room, dining-room and parlour. A birthday occasion is one of the pleasantest of events to witness in a German family. Days before, the brothers and sisters bring together their accumulated pennies, and each invests the same in some love-token, however trifling. If the morning is pleasant, the table is spread in the garden, and on it are placed the gifts—practical ones—from the parents; some simple delicacy, pleasing to the juvenile palate, is added to the usual meal; the flower-offerings are sent, and relatives come to present their congratulation.

FACETIÆ.

BEEs may be said to be paradoxical, in that they are stingy, yet not parsimonious.

A GERMAN inventor has devised a machine for deadening the sound of a piano. Next to a machine for deadening pianists, this is a splendid discovery.

CURRAN, one day when the judge was shaking his head, said, addressing the jury, "Gentlemen, don't be convinced by the learned judge shaking his head, for there's nothing in it."

OLD LADY (trying on youthful hat): "I hardly know which to select." Young Lady: "Shall I send both, madam, so that the young lady may choose for herself?" Old Lady (leaving indignantly): "You need not send either, miss; I will look elsewhere."

"Ah, Harry, I understand you are going to marry that pretty Polly Perkins. Going to be joined in the holy bonds of wedlock, eh?" "Not precisely, Tom; we did intend to be joined, but the old man objected, and now we are enjoined."

MESSANGER (to physician): "Madame Gatti, the singer, is ill and wants you at once." Physician (calmly): "I will be there presently. She often has these little illnesses." Messenger: "To-night is her benefit night." Physician (in alarm): "Great Heavens, she must be dangerously ill, then."

SWELL actor (meeting swell actress at photographer's): "I know you after that last one of me, aren't you, Miss Slaaher?" Swell actress: "You are a perfect mind-reader, Mr. De Block. I've got to play Deademona next week, you know, and I want something that will give me a pained expression every time I look at it."

WOMAN (to tramp): "You might saw a little wood for that nice dinner." Tramp (reproachfully): "Madam, you ought not to throw temptation in the way of a poor man." Woman: "Temptation?" Tramp: "Yes, madam. If I were to saw some wood, the chances are I would carry off the saw. I'm an honest man now, and I want to remain so."

MODERN PROVERB.—A joke that once was funny is like a shirt front that once was white. A man who works for nothing generally just about earns his salary. The man who wants to be an angel usually has the desire reciprocated on the part of his neighbours. If you agree with any one man upon everything, you may set it down that either you or he is an imbecile.

A SONG with the title, "There's a Sigh in the Heart," was sent by a young man to his sweetheart, but the paper fell into the hands of the girl's father, a very unsentimental physician, who exclaimed, "What wretched unscientific rubbish is this? Who ever heard of such a case?" He wrote on the outside, "Mistaken diagnosis; no sigh in the heart possible. Sighs relate almost entirely to the lungs and diaphragm!"

KNOTTY.—It is useless to argue the point with the average Irishman. He will always have the last word, and, as in the following incident, the argument on that last word is unanswerable. It was at a hotel in the country, and the discussion had turned on capital punishment. The noted Judge B— was one of the foremost ones to advocate the affirmative. An Irishman who was present had listened for some time to the discussion, vainly trying to get a word in; at last he succeeded, and the following dialogue took place between him and Judge B—: "So yez wud hang a man for killing another won, wud ye?" "That is my way, sir." "Wud yez hang him for the furst won he kilt, yar Honour?" "If it was clearly proven that he had killed a man, certainly." "Oh! that wud na do at all, at all. Hanging a man is party hard on him." "So I suppose." "An' if ye hung a man for killing the furst man, what wud yez do with him or the second offence?"

"You want more exercise." "But, doctor, I'm a letter-carrier." "Then you need rest. Join the police force."

COLOURED Hunter: "Hold on dar, Abe! You'll strain that gun fua' thing you know, trying ter shoot dat duck so far off, an' de weepson nebbber will be no mo' count."

FASHIONABLE daughter (arrayed in full evening costume): "There, papa, don't you think I will make a great 'catch' to-night?" Unfashionable father: "Quite likely; and the great 'catch' will be pneumonia."

"SENIORITA, will you be my partner in the next dance?" "Please ask mamma." Mamma gives her consent. "And now," said the young man, "you had better go and ask my papa's permission."

WIFE (to sick husband), "A gentleman down stairs, John, wishes to see you." Sick husband: "I'm too ill to see anyone." Wife: "It's the minister, John." Sick Husband: "Well, I am not ill enough to see him yet."

FATHER (to daughter): "Have you accepted the addresses of Mr. Moneybags?" Daughter: "Yes, papa." Father: "Well, isn't he very old, my dear?" Daughter: "Yes, papa; but he isn't nearly as old as I wish he were."

"Are you an actor?" asked a lanky-looking man, addressing a Rialto habitué. "I am, sir-r," was the reply. "Ar-re you looking for talent?" "Not exactly; but I want to ask you what kind of wood, in your opinion, makes the best railway ties."

"LIMBING an' oranges, all sweet. Here y'are!" vociferated a vendor. "Are they all sweet?" demanded a woman with a basket. "Yessum, all sweet." "Well, I wanted to git some lemons, but if they're all sweet I don't want 'em," and she passed fruitlessly on.

WIFE (head out of second-story window): "Is that you, John Smith?" Husband (at front door): "Yes, m'dear." Wife: "Well, say chrysanthemum, or you don't get into this house to-night." Husband (heroically): "Ch-chra-sythemum, m'dear." Wife (banging down the window): "Good-night!"

VALERIE VILLEMER: "But, Auntie, all the researches of modern science convince us that evolution is the only theory to which we can attach any confidence." Admirable Aunt: "Well, my dear, if you won't disturb my ancestors in the Garden of Eden, I will promise not to give nuts to yours at the Zoological Gardens."

VISITOR: "I have come over to see if you will be kind enough to lend me your saw." Neighbour: "We haven't got any saw." Visitor: "But I hear somebody sawing wood every afternoon." Neighbour: "That sound ain't made by anybody sawing wood." Visitor: "What is it then?" Neighbour: "My husband takes a little siesta every afternoon, and he—he breathes a little hard."

"THE only time I ever enjoyed the music of a drum," said a cynical old bachelor, "was once when I knew that an enemy across the way had a baby that he wanted to get to sleep."

WITH stealthy hand he strove to clip,
One golden ringlet from her head.
"Ah, don't." Then with a smiling lip,
"They are my sister Jane's," she said.

A LESSON IN TABLE MANNERS.—It was at a country Sunday-school picnic, where great quantities of the regulation eatables, chiefly apple-pies, had been brought for the children to eat. Little Mary Jane, from away back in the hills, was there, and with her mother, who kept an eye on the child constantly to see that her behaviour was perfect. Presently Mary Jane was observed digging into an apple pie with her knife, whereupon her mother spoke up. "Mary Jane Berka!" "Ma'am?" "What be you a doin'?" "Eatin' pie, ma'am." "What be you a-eatin' it with?" "Knife!" "So you be! Now what have I told you about eatin' pie with your knife, Mary Jane? Take that pie up in your hand and eat it as you'd ought to!"

VERMICELLI SOUP.—Manager (to supernumerary): "I am going to give you a small part in the new play; do you wish your real name on the bill, or will you use an assumed name?" Supernumerary: "I will use an assumed name." Manager: "Very good; what shall it be?" Supernumerary: "Signor Vermicelli." Manager: "That's a high-sounding name; why do you use Vermicelli? Got it out of a cookery-book, did you?" Supernumerary: "Yes, and I use it because I'm a supe, you know."

MIRTHFUL MORSELS.

WHAT is the difference between a gentleman and a dog's tail? One keeps a carriage, and the other keeps a wagging.

A dog lying on the hearth-rug with his nose to his tail is the emblem of economy. He makes both ends meet.

BROWN to JONES: "I say, lend me a crown until to-morrow. You see I changed my vest this morning." JONES: "I'm sorry, but I've just invested my change."

WIFE: "I don't see how you can say that Mr. Whitechocker has an effeminate way of talking. He has a very loud voice." Husband: "I mean by an effeminate way of talking, my dear, that he talks all the time."

THE following inscription was painted on a board at a ford: "Take notice! When this board is under water, the river is impassable."

LANDLADY: "What's the matter, Mr. Jones, you don't seem to care for the plum preserves?" Mr. JONES: "No, thanks: I I guess I'm plum full."

POOR MISSIONARIES.—A mother gave her little boy two bright new pennies, and asked him what he was going to do with them. After a moment's thought the child replied, "I am going to give one to the missionaries, and with the other I am going to buy sweets." After a while he returned from his play, and told his mother that he had lost one of the pennies. "Which did you lose?" she asked. "I lost the missionary penny," he promptly replied.

A GENTLEMAN met his little boy in the street and asked him how they were all coming on at home. "First-rate: mamma has made you a whole new shirt." "Tell mamma when I come home I'll give her a shilling," remarked the gentleman, pleasantly. "Better give it to me." "You didn't make the shirt." "If I hadn't kept my eye on ma she would have been leaning over the fence talking about fashions instead of working. It's me who should be encouraged."

COOK in a boarding-house: "Now, having had your breakfast, I think you might do a little work for me." Tramp: "I'd like ter oblaige ye, mum, but I'm just fagged out." Cook: "Nonsense; I don't see what could have made you so tired?" Tramp: "A-achewin' at that there steak ye give me, mum."

"I NOTICE" said a gentleman in search of information to an agitator, "that the Anarchists never strike. Why is this?" "That," said the great apostle of mouth as a factor in social progress, with much dignity, "is easily explained. No true Anarchist ever works."

"JOHN, I wish you wouldn't go to balls and parties—it is very bad indeed." "Father, didn't you and mother go to balls and parties when you were young?" "Yes, my son—but we have seen the folly of it." "Well, I want to see the folly of it too, father."

A TEACHER asked a boy who was the meekest man? "Moses, sir," was the answer. "Very well, my boy; and now, who was the meekest woman?" "Please sir, there never was any meekest woman."

"I SAY, Broom!" "Call me by my whole name, if you please. It has a handle to it, and it was meant to be used, sir." "That's so. Well, Broomhandle, how are you?"

"THEY tell me you have had some money left you," said Brown. "Yes, replied Fogg, sadly, "It left me long ago."

SOCIETY.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF SWEDEN, the Crown Prince and Princess, with a numerous suite, left Stockholm by a special train for Christiania on the 14th ult., the train arriving at Christiania at 11 25 the following morning. The Royal party were received by the highest military and civil officials, and several beautiful bouquets were presented to the Queen and Crown Princess. The King and Queen drove to the castle in a four-in-hand, the Crown Prince and Princess following in another. At the castle were the President of the Diet, the Bishop of Christiania, and a great number of officers and high civil functionaries assembled to welcome the Royal visitors. In the evening there was a dinner given in honour of the King by H.E. Herr Sverdrup, the President of the Diet. The King took Fråken Sverdrup in to dinner. His Majesty during his visit to Christiania availed himself of the splendid skating the Norwegian capital afforded. The King and Queen's stay at Christiania was expected to last until the 11th or 12th of March. His Majesty is expected to again visit Norway during the summer, and intends, according to present arrangements, personally to open the penitential exhibition at Drontheim in the month of July.

THE KING OF DENMARK, while dancing at the Court ball, slipped and fell, bruising his head. His Majesty has completely recovered from the effects of the accident.

THE KING OF THE BELGIANS recently visited the foundry of the Compagnie des Bronzes in Brussels to inspect the Gordon monument by Mr. Boehm, destined for St. Paul's, which has been executed by the Compagnie. Those present thought the monument both imposing and touching, and the execution excellent.

THE MARCHIONESS OF SALISBURY's first reception at the Premier's residence in Arlington-street was a grand success. There were present, among others, the Austrian Ambassador and Countess Karolyi, the Italian Ambassador, the Danish Minister and Mme. de Falbo, the Persian Minister and Princess Sultane Malcom, the Argentine Minister and Mme. and Mlle. Dominguez, the Swedish, Brazilian, Portuguese, Japanese, Belgian, Netherlands, Nicaraguan, Chinese, and Greek Ministers; the United States, Siamese, and Hawaiian Chargé d'Affaires; the Duke of Leeds, Marquis of Normandy, Marchioness of Lothian and Ladies Cecil and Mary Kerr, Dowager Marchioness of Waterford, Earl Granville, Earl of Orkney, Earl of Limerick, Earl of Powis, Earl of Ducie, Earl of Northesk and Lady Helen Carnegie, Earl Waldegrave, Earl of Crawford, Earl of Kintore, Countess of Normanton and Lady Beatrice Agar and Hon. Sydney Agar, Countess Howe and Ladies Curzon, Earl of Arran, Earl of Faversham, Earl and Countess De La Warr, Countess of Lytton and Ladies Lytton, Earl of Ashburnham, Viscount and Viscountess Cross and Hon. Miss Cross, Viscount and Viscountess Curzon.

The Duchess of Leeds wore a handsome dress of electric blue satin; the Duchess of Buckingham was attired in black satin; the Countess Karolyi's dress of pale blue satin was beautifully embroidered in gold; the Countess of Egremont wore peach satin; Lady Barghley was in blue broadened velvet in two shades; Princess Sultane Malcom wore cream faille; Lady Cynthia Dancombe, cream silk; the Hon. Miss Brodrick, deep ruby plush; the Hon. Mrs. Edward Thesiger, pale pink broadie; Lady Windsor, cream satin broadie.

THE COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, while staying at Agra, visited the Medical School, and showed much interest in the arrangements made there to carry out the objects of Lady Dufferin's scheme. After going round some of the wards of the Thomson Hospital her ladyship proceeded to the lecture hall, where she delivered a suitable and most impressive address to the female medical pupils.

STATISTICS.

"Thrift among children" no doubt sounds strange. But it is a fact that in France thrift among children has since 1874 been inculcated and developed to no small extent. Over twenty-three thousand School Savings Banks have been opened, numbering in January last year no less than 488,624 depositions, with deposits amounting in the aggregate, formed of the bona fide pocket-money of children, to £451,000.

HOW PARIS GETS ITS BREAD.—There are over 7,000 bakers in Paris. Of these 4,500 are men and 2,500 women. They have to work very hard for their living, but seem happy and comfortable. They are divided into the following categories: Bakers, 4,000; bread-carriers (women), 1,700; bread-carriers (men), 700; clerks (women), 800; Viennese bakers, 400; clerks (men), 20; and pastrymen employed by bakers, 200. The usual wages are about seven francs a day. The maximum wages are ten francs a day, and the minimum are five francs.

GEMS.

We love characters in proportion as they are impulsive and spontaneous.

INQUISITIVE people are the funerals of conversation; they do not take in anything for their own use, but merely to pass it to another.

DIRECTLY any one thinks himself heroic the last trace of heroism has vanished from him, for the very essence of heroism, is that self is forgotten in something outside of self.

ETERNITY is crying out to you louder and louder as you near its brink. Rise, be going! Count your resources; learn what you can do, and do it with the energy of a man.

Of all the actions of a man's life his marriage doth least concern other people; yet of all actions of our life it is most meddled with by other people.

No moral teaching, be it ever so sound, no precepts, be they ever so wise, will avail to counteract the powerful influence that emanates unconsciously from character and example.

THE philosophers of old did inquire whether the summum bonum consisted in riches, bodily delights, virtue or contemplation; they might just as reasonably have disputed whether the best relish were in apples, plums or nuts.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PUFF PUDDING.—One quart of boiling milk, nine tablespoonfuls of flour; when cold add a little salt and four well-beaten eggs. Bake in a buttered dish, and serve with lemon juice thickened to a paste with brown sugar.

JUMBLES.—One cup of butter, two cups of sugar, three eggs, one teaspoonful of soda, two of best cream of tartar; use half a cup of warm water to dissolve the soda, flavour with vanilla or lemon, thicken with flour, and roll out thin.

APPLE FRITTERS.—Make a batter of the yolks of three eggs well beaten, one gill of milk, four heaping teaspoonfuls of flour, and a tablespoonful of salt, well mixed. The apples, which have been peeled, cored and cut in round slices, are dipped in this batter and fried a delicate brown in boiling fat. Sprinkle with powdered sugar, and serve.

CHICKEN HASH.—Mince cold roast or boiled chicken, but not very fine, and to a cupful of meat add two tablespoonfuls of good butter, half a cup of milk, enough minced onion to give a slight flavour, and salt, pepper and mace to taste. Stew it, taking care to stir it, and serve daintily with a garnish of parsley. Every particle of bone must be subtracted.

MISCELLANEOUS.

REINDEER meat is the latest dainty affected by German epicures. It sells at from 6d. to 8d. per pound in the Berlin market.

PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE.—You understand, do you not, that if we would see things aright, we must see them from the point of view of others as well as from our own? This is the quality we ought to cultivate even if we can never perfect it; and this is the essence of justice. Our own standard, however broad, is too narrow to gauge the world by.

UNWIS.—We believe in playing with children. It is almost or quite impossible to prevent children from becoming excited at play, and so long as the excitement is within reasonable bounds it does no harm. But excitement just before going to bed is, of course, undesirable, and in nervous children decidedly harmful, by preventing restful sleep. Little girls should be denied the romp before bedtime which at another time would be healthful, just as you deny them at night the chop or steak that they may advantageously take at noon.

THE "can't," spelled with an apostrophe has done a deal more to hinder the advancement of righteousness in the world than has the "cant" that is spelled without the apostrophe. Among those who were counted unfit for battle, mentioned in the twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy, was the tribe of apostrophe can't's: "What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." Satan can use a discouraged man; God never does, except as a sign board of warning.

THE RAMANAS ROSE.—"The Japanese," says a writer in "Vick's Monthly," "make free use of this picturesque shrub. Happening to show the crimson Ramanas rose to a decorative artist some days ago, he was silent for a few seconds, then exclaimed, 'Now, I understand it all,' and went on to say he had been that morning examining a beautiful Japanese screen, but (unheeding the leaves) felt completely puzzled to know why they drew their apples with blossoms on the same branch. Now he recognized the large fruit of the rose in what he had mistaken for apples, and carried away a branch to design from."

A COFFEE-CUP BAROMETER.—The following, from a Spanish journal, may amuse our readers, and will, perhaps, be found as reliable as certain other popular barometric devices: "When a lump of sugar is dropped into coffee, and allowed to dissolve without being stirred, the bubbles of air contained within it rise to the surface of the liquid. If a foamy mass is found which remains in the centre of the cup, it is said to be an indication of fair weather; but if, on the contrary, the bubbles are scattered from the centre, and collect in a ring around the edge of the cup, the probabilities are, that there will be rain." The coffee must, however, be good; for, if adulterated, these appearances will not be presented.

ENORMOUS EGGS.—The largest birds' eggs in existence are found on the island of Madagascar, belonging to an extinct species known among the naturalists as the Epiornis. The discovery of these eggs was made by a sea captain who stopped at a port in the southern part of Madagascar to trade with the natives. During his stay there the curious dishes which the natives used to carry food and water in attracted his attention, and upon investigation he found they were egg-shells cut in halves; and, upon being questioned, the natives informed him that they obtained them from the great sand-banks some distance away in the interior. An offer to purchase some soon resulted in the discovery of others, and also in finding the bones of the bird which laid them. The latter established the fact that the Epiornis was a giant among birds, some of the species attaining the stature of twelve or thirteen feet.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

PAT.—Pretty good, but rather irregular.

F. W. L.—Certainly not.

H. W.—The person named died some time ago.

M. L.—An experienced physician might aid you.

B. A.—No personal knowledge of it.

FREDDY WILD.—We never publish addresses of any kind.

ETTA.—Judged by your penmanship, you are of a cool, straightforward disposition.

E. L. L.—Malarial fever might, by impoverishing the blood, cause skin eruptions.

FLORENCE MORE.—It was the cut direct. Have nothing more to do with him.

G. W. S.—There are so many excellent makes of pianos and organs that we feel unable to state which is considered the best.

R. D. R.—Send your inquiry to the address quoted, and perhaps full details concerning the publication in question may be thus obtained.

VOLODA.—If you are solvent make a post-nuptial settlement. Any solicitor will draw it up for you. It must be registered every five years.

VALENTINE.—Avoid stimulants and all starchy and greasy food, potatoes, and too much vegetable. Take also plenty of exercise.

SISTER AMY.—1. Certainly advertise. 2. Golden brown. 3. Two years too young. 3. Yes. 4. Fair writing.

MARY.—Your leisure moments can be profitably and pleasantly employed in embroidery or other light fancy work.

MINNIE P.—1. Tied with red, nearly black; tied with maroon, dark brown; tied with pink, fawn; tied with blue, golden. 2. Very fair writing, indicating rather a decided character.

B. G. H.—Send your full name and address to the publisher, accompanied with a list of the back numbers wanted, and the price required will be immediately sent to you.

P. C. S.—When walking with a lady in the street in daylight it is not customary for the gentleman to offer his arm; but at night he should never neglect to do so, thus affording her protection.

R. S. S.—In all branches of business when a person buys several articles of the same kind, he or she is allowed a certain discount not given when a single article is purchased.

D. W. B.—Continental money, unless of very rare date and issue, is a drug in the market. So many clever counterfeiters, or fac-similes, have been made of that currency that even experts are occasionally puzzled with specimens presented by curiosity seekers.

P. S. H.—Ask some mutual friend to introduce you to the gentleman. We feel positive that in a short time after becoming acquainted with you he will be happy only when in your company, and willingly enter society.

E. C. S.—Celery salt, which imparts such a pleasant flavour to soups, oysters, gravies, or hashes, can be very easily made at home by saving the root of the celery-plant, drying and grating it, and then mixing with it one-third as much fine table-salt. It must be kept in a well-corked bottle in order to preserve its flavour.

G. V. W.—The following is a simple remedy for frost-bites:—Extract the frost by the application of ice-water till the frozen part is pliable, but let no artificial heat touch it; then apply a salve made of equal parts of hog's lard and gunpowder rubbed together until it forms a paste, and in less than four hours the frozen parts will be well.

M. N. H.—The month of March was named from Mars, the Roman god of war. It was the first month in the early Roman calendar, and the legal year began with March 25, even in England, until the change from old style to new style, in 1752. The old style is still retained in Russia, and the financial year of Great Britain is reckoned from March 31.

LITTLE WONDER informs us that a beautiful oleander owned by her is infested with myriads of little insects, and asks whether there is a way to rid her pet of these pests. All that is necessary is to dissolve a piece of lime the size of a hen's egg in about two quarts of water, and then wash the stems and branches of the tree with this compound. Several applications may be necessary, but the final result will be most satisfactory.

GENIE F. writes that she has had a jealous lover who quarrelled with her because she danced with a friend, after being left alone at a party. She was rendered very unhappy by the irate man's remarks on their way home, and finally became angry. A quarrel ensued, and she asks us what we think of this state of things. She also wishes to know if her writing is good, and if one hundred and thirty-five pounds is a correct weight for a medium-sized woman? We think the man was altogether at fault. His conduct was inexcusable, and we hope the young lady will not condescend to him by seeking to make friends with him till he has apologized to her. The weight is that usual for a healthy person, and the writing is extremely good, but the orthography is at fault.

J. T.—You will find the quotation in Owen Meredith's "Lucille."

META.—Spithead is named from the sandbank named the Spit between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

JOHNIE.—1. You are a bold, determined character, who will make a way in the world. 2. Very good.

LAURA.—You would, perhaps, do best as telegraph clerk. The field of shorthand or type-writing is over crowded.

READER.—The lady should have the inside in walking, and precede a gentleman either in going up or going downstairs.

TOM S.—In boating parties, one gentleman should always stay in the boat and do his best to steady it while the others help the ladies to step in from the bank or landing.

L. A. A.—"Convent Garden" is a corruption of Convent Garden, it having formed the garden of St. Peter's Convent. The piazza and church were designed by Inigo Jones.

C. S. A.—We can see no reason why the right to compose poetry should be given to men only, as the gentler sex, generally speaking, are more poetical and romantic than the so-called "lords of creation."

R. R.—Your penmanship ranks far above the general average received by us. It would seem to indicate a wide-awake, pushing, determined character in the one by whom it was executed.

W. A. A.—Raw beef prepared in the manner spoken of is harmless provided the animal from which the meat was obtained was in a healthy condition when killed. It is best, however, to run no risk in the matter, and thoroughly cook the meat before using.

NOT ALONE.

ALONE! and yet I wend my way
Through the city's busiest places,
And seek along the thoroughfare
A wilderness of faces.

I clasp the friendly hands of men,
They shall not to my own;
I sit at table with the guests,
And yet, I am alone.

Oh! loneliness, the loneliest
That poet ever sung,
To find to all our questions
No answering heart-chord strung.

To seek among the thousand eyes
That round us gleam and dance,
To vain for one sweet look of love,
One sympathizing glance.

To think the crowd will still go on,
The laughter still be high;
To yet be told, the song be sung,
Whether we live or die.

And yet if we but close our eyes,
Some loved one all our own
May answer to our spirit call,
And then we're not alone.

M. A. K.

W. B.—It was in ancient Rome. The Supercalia was a festival of the ancient Romans in honour of the god Pan, which occurred in the month of March.

E. G. H.—Do not be too exacting with your lady-love, as she may tire of such iron-handed ruling and break the engagement. The fact of her being your promised wife does not cut her off from all communication with gentleman friends, or forbid the introduction to her of others. Jealousy is composed largely of petty selfishness, and you are indeed giving evidence of the possession of more than an ordinary share of it.

PERCY F.—A doctor is the proper authority to consult on the subject of brain and nerve affections. Remedies for these troubles are advertised extensively in the papers, but their worth cannot always be vouched for. The majority of cases of such affections are caused by overwork of the brain and muscles. The only remedy, therefore, is perfect rest and a mild course of treatment at the hands of an experienced practitioner.

LADYBIRD.—"German puts" for cage-birds consists of eggs, panned, and olive-oil. Boil four eggs until quite hard; then throw them into cold water: remove the white, grate or pound the yolks until quite fine and add a pint of white pomeat and a tablespoonful of olive-oil. Mix all together, and press the resulting dough through a fine colander, so as to form into small grains like shot. Fry these over a gentle fire, gradually stirring them until of a light-brown colour, when they are fit for use.

R. G. H.—1. The drama in some form being almost as old as society itself, the theatre is among the most ancient buildings erected by man. The drama, as it exists in Europe and America, dates back to the ancient Greeks, and can be traced back, in its two grand divisions of tragedy and comedy, to nearly 1,000 years before the Christian era. 2. There is such a diversity of opinion regarding the moral effect upon humanity of the theatre and theatricals that we do not deem it desirable to express any decided ideas concerning the subject.

C. S. J.—The lives of eminent men and women, questions of a literary character, art and poetry, afford the best subjects for discussion.

L. F. F.—The only course in such a case, if you wish to dispose of the property, is to obtain the services of a lawyer.

ELISE.—1. In French "my dear girl" is *ma chère fille*. 2. All hair is darkened, and the growth is promoted by a frequent use of ament and water and cold tea. 3. Alum is not healthy for the complexion.

W. T.—Not to accept invitations to the receptions is to thrust yourself into the background, and give the gentlemen good reason for "passing you by" in their attentions, on other occasions.

J. J. S.—Follow your friend's suggestion, and you will be better and happier for it. Do not encourage moodiness or indecision. Try to be loving, natural, and joyous, and to brighten your home in every possible way.

L. E. V.—*Chiaroscuro* is an Italian word, sometimes rendered in English by the term "clear-obscure," which is used in painting to designate the effective distribution of the lights and shadows of a picture. The painters to whom you refer, Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, Giorgione, and Rembrandt, were the chief masters of the art.

DORINE.—Luthe's Waters mean for stiffness and a sleep. It is a mythological river. Caaron, in mythology, is the son of Erebus and Nox. It was his office to ferry the dead in his crazy boat over the dark fens of Acheron, over Ceytus, resounding with doleful lamentations of the dead, and finally over Styx, dreaded even by immortals. He was represented as an old man with a gloomy aspect, matted beard, and tattered garments.

F. M.—To be on glass and china ware to sudden change of temperature, so that it will remain sound after exposure to sudden heat and cold, is best done by placing the articles in cold water, which must gradually be brought to the boiling point and then allowed to cool very slowly, taking several hours to do so. The commoner the material the more care in this respect is required. If the wares are properly seasoned in this way they may be washed in boiling water without fear of fracture except in frosty weather, when, even with the best annealed wares, care must be taken not to place them suddenly in too hot water.

L. I. W.—To renovate crapes, brush the crapes thoroughly with a soft brush, and pin it over an ironing sheet. Then cover it entirely with a piece of wet cloth—dark muslin is the best—and lay a dry cloth over and press lightly with a hot flat-iron. Leave it for an hour or two to become perfectly dry, after removing the damp cloth. Crapes veils which have been exposed to rain, or have lost their stiffness in the damp air, may be pressed by carefully folding them, then placing them between two mattresses which are to be slept upon.

F. F. D.—The significations attached to the precious stones are as follows:—Garnet, constancy; amethyst, sincerity; bloodstone, courage; diamond, innocence; emerald, success in life; agate, health and long life; cornelian, content; sardonyx, wedded happiness; chrysolite, antidote to madness; opal, hope; topaz, fidelity; turquoise, prosperity; pearl, purity. Regard rings are those having a setting composed of the six stones—ruby, emerald, garnet, amethyst, ruby and diamond. The gems have been arranged into a gem alphabet, which runs—amethyst, beryl, chrysoberyl, diamond, emerald, feldspar, garnet, hyacinth, jasper, kyanite, lapis lazuli, malachite, natrolite, opal, porphyry, quartz, agate, ruby, sapphire, topaz, ultramarine, verd-antique, wood-opal, xanthite, zircon.

DOTA.—Amy Robson was the wife of R. Bert Diddle, afterwards Earl of Leicestershire. She was secretly married to him, and her death was caused by a trepanneur (supposed to have been loosened by Richard Verney, her former servant) as she was running to meet her husband. She is the heroine of Scott's novel "Kenilworth" but her true history is shrouded in mystery, around which the novelist has found scope for his imagination. Queen Elizabeth's treatment of Robert Dudley was like her life, capricious. She seemed to hold him in high favour at times, while again she would treat him with scorn. She said, "I consider him the most virtuous and perfect man I know, but," she added, "I shall never marry him." The Queen is known in history as the Virgin Queen.

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